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NEWS 5
Govt scraps trams; Stagecoach's Manchester plans; Go-Ahead buys into West Midlands
BUS PEOPLE 13
TfL chief steps down; death of Photobus founder
GLOBAL NEWS 14
Stagecoach sells NZ business; Vancouver trolleybus; giant Citaro artic
IN LONDON 16
TfL prepares for C-charge extension; launch of heritage RMs
INSIDE TRACK 18
Waste, duplication and co-ordination failures
MILLAR'S TALES 20
Routemasters and men with machine guns; Christmas crossword
WHERE NEXT FOR LONDON'S ROUTE MASTER? 22
Peter Hendy tells us about low-emission buses and plans for even more mileage
DGC BUSES: A CHILD OF ITS TIME 26
We look at a local authority bus fleet that isn't a company
THE OWN LABEL BUS COMPANY 30
The Anglo-Hungarian company behind the Plaxton Primo
READER COMPETITION 33
Win one of five Enviro400 diecasts

ON THE NET 35
When's the next bus to Dunfermline? What will it cost?
PICTUREVIEW 36
A pictorial tribute in memory of Arnold Richardson
TRAWS CAMBRIA ONE YEAR ON 38
How the Welsh Assembly is upgrading cross-country bus links
YOU WRITE 40
PTEs, deregulation, First and bus lanes
PUBLICITY MATTERS 45
Exploring our heritage by bus
FLEET NEWS ENGLAND & WALES 46
Compiled by John G. Lidstone
HALFCABS ETCETERA 51
More old buses at home and abroad
FLEET NEWS SCOTLAND 58
Compiled by Sandy Macdonald
FLEET NEWS IRELAND 63
Compiled by G. Irvine Millar and Ian Molloy
REVIEWS 64
More of the latest books and diecast models
THE FENTON FILE 66
The story of the Volvo C10M
PRESERVATION UPDATE 67
The Samuel Ledgard memorial Routemaster

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
from everyone at **BUSES** to all our readers and advertisers

▲ **PAGE 10 - Old names, new identity**
JOHN MARSH

▲ **PAGE 15 - Citaro bendy gets even bigger**

▲ **PAGE 30 - Next stop New Zealand**

▲ **PAGE 38 - Welsh wizardry RHODRI CLARK**

TIME FOR THE TRAM FANS TO SWALLOW THE BUS PILL

Just in case there is even a fragment of doubt on the subject, this magazine likes trams. Some of us are old enough to remember the last years of the first generation of British trams and sometimes lament the loss of the opportunity to turn the best of them into modern rapid transit systems.

But with the government apparently having finally put paid to plans for their reintroduction to Liverpool, Portsmouth, Gosport and Fareham, and in no obvious rush to revive the tram dreams of Leeds and Manchester, surely decision makers in these and other conurbations should far more seriously consider the bus-based alternative.

As First has shown with its innovative 'ftr' concept and now Stagecoach is offering in a very different way with its vision of giant guided articulated double-deckers on trunk arteries in Manchester, these aren't buses as we know them. Or as the lay public, politicians and planners know them. These are buses that look and behave like trams, and have all the tramway infrastructure other than rails or maybe overhead wires. And they come at a fraction of the cost.

So why aren't planners and politicians clamouring to put what Americans call bus rapid transit on to hundreds of our streets? If it's because they perceive buses as smelly, noisy, polluting hulks, they are behind the times. Such is the revolution in diesel engine design that it will take 25 buses with Euro5 engines to create the emissions of just one built before 1992.

And as Transport for London's Peter Hendy observes this month, diesel electric hybrid technology is on the verge of becoming mainstream in the UK, creating the conditions for the widespread availability of ultra low emission buses as quiet as a trolleybus — yet unrestricted by overhead wires.

If planners and politicians dislike deregulated buses because they cannot control them in the way they could control trams or trains, there appears to be a growing chance of some change. With the government edging slowly, if a little reluctantly, towards franchising in a few places and circumstances — perhaps as the *quid pro quo* for congestion charging, maybe that objection can be overcome.

They need to stop seeing the big groups as pirates or profiteering robber barons — and part of the onus is on the groups to ensure they don't contribute to that perception. The decision makers should also discard any prejudices about buses being for the lowest common denominators in society. And above all, they need to accept that with this government — and one must assume the only other alternative administration realistically on offer at the next election — the bus (or StreetCar, road train, BRT or any other euphemistic fancy name you choose) is the only mass transit option available for the foreseeable future.

Trams might still be the answer for the day after tomorrow, but to provide an affordable alternative to the car today, buses are the only show in town.

ALAN MILLAR

THE EDITOR HAS MOVED!!!

The *Buses* editorial office has moved about 70 miles east to the opposite side of Scotland. The e-mail address remains the same — **buseseditor@btconnect.com** — but everything else has changed.

The new postal address to contact the editor or to send in any photographs, articles or letters for the magazine is ***Buses*, PO Box 14644, Leven, KY9 1WX**. The new phone number is **01333 340637** and the new fax number is **01333 340608**. Mail sent to the Glasgow address will be forwarded, but as Royal Mail policy is only to redirect mail from a PO Box for a maximum of **six months**, please amend your records as mail sent there after **16 June** will apparently be returned to senders.

Our other contact details are unchanged. To contact our **advertising** department, call the **Stamford** office. For enquiries about **subscriptions and back issues**, call the **Hersham** office. Details on the opposite page.

Cover picture: The DGC Buses fleet (see p26) has two ex-Trent DAF SB220s with Optare Delta bodies.

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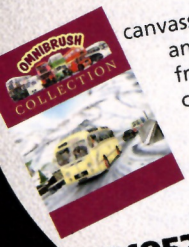

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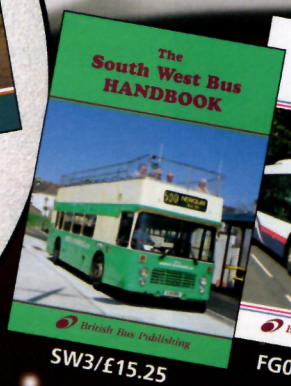

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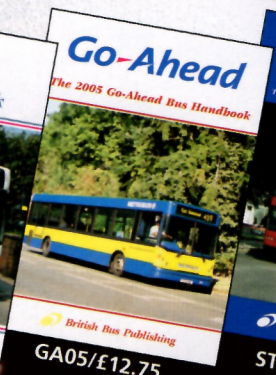

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GOVERNMENT SIDELINES TRAMS, PROVIDES FUNDS FOR PILOT CONGESTION CHARGING AND HINTS AT SOME BUS RE-REGULATION

Within the space of two weeks in November, the government killed off England's remaining new tramway projects, provided £7.5million for local authorities in seven English regions to develop London-style congestion charging schemes and confirmed that bus re-regulation is still being considered.

Transport secretary Alistair Darling — who wants more bus-based public transport projects — and transport minister Derek Twigg announced on 29 November that the Department for Transport has withdrawn its funding for the Liverpool-Kirkby Merseytram Line 1 and the 14km Fareham-Gosport-Portsmouth first phase of South Hampshire Rapid Transit.

The DfT first approved Merseytram three years ago, agreeing to pay £170million of the projected £225million cost, but refused to increase this last May when the cost had reached £315million. With Merseyside local authorities refusing to bear all the additional costs, the DfT has axed the tramway, which replaced the earlier Merseyside Rapid Transit project for electronically guided trolleybuses.

The DfT says the cost of the South Hants scheme — with a tunnel under Portsmouth Harbour — has risen from £319million over the 36 years of a private finance scheme to £674million, with the public sector commitment rising from £170million to £270million.

Now, only Edinburgh tramway Lines 1 and 2 — funded by the Scottish Executive — are progressing, although the Confederation of British Industry wants them to be delayed until the Scottish motorway network is completed. Significantly, First took the prototype Wright StreetCar to Edinburgh and Glasgow in November in an effort to sell its 'ftr' bus rapid transit concept to local authorities seeking affordable alternatives to trams.

The day before he axed the tramways, Alistair Darling named the seven areas to share the first £7.46million of funding to develop congestion charging schemes. Another £10.5million is earmarked for similar studies over the next two years. Three areas with passenger transport executives — West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Tyne & Wear — share £4.8million. The other four studies will be in Bristol/Bath, Shrewsbury, Cambridgeshire and Durham.

Durham already has a congestion charging scheme around its cathedral precincts and on 1 December transport minister Karen Buck opened the city's £9 million, three-site park-&-ride scheme — the first in north-east England. West Cornforth-based Scarlet Band Coaches is using 10 new Optare Solos to provide a 10min service to each car park.

Congestion charging is one circumstance in which the government might permit London-style bus franchising in other cities. Earlier in November, Alistair Darling spelt out his thoughts to the House of Commons backbench transport committee. 'If local authorities, or the PTE in the case of Manchester, come forward with comprehensive measures to manage demand in relation to their overall transport, then we are prepared to look at taking additional powers which will allow a rather more effective control of the way in which buses operate.

'The reason that I say that is because if, for example, you were going to do road pricing within a particular area or region, you would have to combine it with good quality public transport and you would need to be certain the public transport was actually there,' he said.

Above: A sign of things to come? First's Volvo B7LA-based Wright StreetCar in St Andrew Square, Edinburgh on 16 November, the day Alistair Darling — an Edinburgh MP — met the Commons transport committee. MURDOCH CURRIE

'What I do not want to do is to lose the benefits we have had in some parts of the country [from deregulation]. But equally I am . . . concerned that I think we could do far more to exploit the use of buses, particularly in the larger conurbations and busier cities, than we are doing at the moment. And I do not think we have got it quite right just yet.'

He says the DfT has still to finalise its plans. 'If you want people to transfer either to the tram or to buses and to do other things to control the amount of traffic, then you have got to have a reasonable certainty that, firstly, there will be a bus service, secondly, that there will be sufficient spaces available on the buses to take the number of people you are now talking about, and, thirdly, that you avoid the situation where you spend huge amounts of money on a tram only to discover that the passengers are cherry-picked by somebody running alongside a few times of the day and not all times of the day.

'Bus operators outside London and outside the areas that have done well do recognise that the present situation is not satisfactory and that we do need to do more to make buses an attractive alternative to the car.'

Right: NX55 FFS, one of the Optare Solos that Scarlet Band is using on the new park-&-ride services in Durham. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

2006 RALLY CALENDARS

Once again, *Buses* will publish its eagerly sought-after Rally Calendar & Museum Guide in our March and April issues.

Each 16-page guide will be published free inside the magazine, complete with photographs and details of where and when rallies, running days, swapmeets and enthusiast fairs are being held throughout the British Isles. Part 1 in March *Buses* will list events taking place up to 30 June. Part 2 in April *Buses* will cover the rest of the year.

If you are planning any of these events for 2006, don't miss the opportunity to have it promoted free of charge. Please send the details to the Editor at the **NEW ADDRESS: *Buses* Rally Calendar, PO Box 14644, Leven, KY9 1WX**, fax **01333 340608** or e-mail **buseseditor@btconnect.com** to arrive no later than **Friday 13 January** for Part 1 or **Friday 28 January** for Part 2.

STAGECOACH PROPOSES LITTLE AND GUIDED LARGE TO COMBAT MANCHESTER TRAM PLANS

Stagecoach has countered Greater Manchester PTE's Local Transport Plan (LTP) with proposals for a range of bus-based initiatives using park-&-ride, optically guided articulated double-deckers and demand responsive feeder minibuses. Stagecoach says the LTP does little to promote imaginative bus-based schemes, other than the Leigh busway, which will primarily benefit FirstGroup, even though the PTE has singled out First's performance for criticism. The group placed full-page adverts in the *Manchester Evening News* entitled 'Manchester Deserves Better', which suggest that the PTE's plan has failed to deliver a transport strategy for the city.

In a report from the TAS consultancy, Stagecoach says it now carries 25% more full fare adults in Manchester than when it bought GM Buses South in 1996. It acknowledges that this has been achieved with the PTE's positive support, but it contrasts this with a 4% annual decline in passenger numbers in 1975-79 and 2% in 1980-86 when the PTE owned and operated the buses.

It says it has increased its fleet there by 10% to overcome traffic congestion, and is spending £5million extra a year to maintain existing frequencies. Yet chief executive Brian Souter considers that it gets nothing out of the LTP, which majors on extensions to the Metrolink tram service, and he says traffic speeds in Manchester will continue to deteriorate rapidly.

'The draft bus strategy document is a disappointment,' says Stagecoach. 'It offers no new ideas or initiatives and appears to seek a downgrading of buses to a secondary role of feeding at rail stations.

'Although interchange with Metrolink and rail is important, this only accounts for 4% of our customers and all our passenger growth has occurred on core routes, which give the customers what they want — frequent, direct and reliable services. Action is needed to improve services for the other 96% of our customers and to make improvements that will attract more people from cars.'

Brian Souter says Stagecoach supports the proposed Metrolink extensions, but considers that the LTP is so short on bus policy that the government will have to reject it. That could jeopardise Metrolink.

Above: Stagecoach's radical plans include the use of optically guided, three-door, four-axle articulated buses apparently based on the Alexander Dennis Enviro400.

Stagecoach hopes to have a detailed strategy for south Manchester ready by January, but already is talking of bus rapid transit on major corridors that cannot support light rail. It says these could be in place in 12 months, and at relatively low cost, whereas Metrolink takes years from planning to implementation.

As it also is proposing for Cambridge, these would use guided buses with optical guidance systems rather than concrete guideways, a concept that TAS illustrates with three-door, four-axle articulated double-deckers based on the Alexander Dennis Enviro400. As with rail-based rapid transit, they would be designed for rapid boarding and alighting, with passengers buying tickets at tram-style stops.

Stagecoach also proposes to intercept incoming car traffic with up to seven 5,000-vehicle park-&-ride sites around south Manchester. Some would involve relocating Stagecoach garages to locations on trunk roads on the outskirts, so that depot space vacated by buses during the day could be used for car parking. Brian Souter asks why it is that out of 36 urban centres in Britain with successful park-&-ride schemes, none is in a PTE area.

It calls for extensive bus priorities, which would also make buses less likely to hold up other traffic than today. It points to the example of Edinburgh's Greenways, with strategic focus to prevent, for instance, a delivery vehicle delaying hundreds of peak-hour road users. Rather than divert buses off main roads into low density housing areas, Stagecoach proposes demand responsive feeder services along the lines of its recently withdrawn Yellow Taxibus connection between Dunfermline and Edinburgh. Although commercially unsuccessful, it attracted car users who would not have used buses.

Above: Demand-responsive Yellow Taxibuses like the Mercedes-Benz Vitos used on the Edinburgh-Dunfermline service could provide suburban feeder connections.

GO-AHEAD BUYS BIRMINGHAM COACH CO

Go-Ahead has expanded into the West Midlands by paying £2.025million in cash and shares for Birmingham Passenger Transport Services, parent company of the 123-vehicle Birmingham Coach Company.

The deal, announced as we closed for press on 5 December, takes Go-Ahead into a conurbation dominated by the National Express Group's Travel West Midlands, but where Arriva, First and Stagecoach also operate. BCC garages 91 Diamond Bus-branded buses — mainly VDL SB120s, Dennis Darts and Lances and Optare Excels — in Tividale, running most in competition with TWM. It also has 23 National Express coaches and a small coach depot in Bradford.

Potentially, this will allow Go-Ahead to compete with the others for franchised services should Centro, the West Midlands PTE, be given powers to regulate bus routes.

■ **Go-Ahead restructures on south coast, p10**

UK BUS AWARDS GO WEST — TO SCOTLAND AND CORNWALL

The top honours in the 2005 UK Bus Awards have been taken by operators in the west of Scotland and the west of England.

Bus Operator of the Year was Stagecoach West Scotland, whose Western Buses and Stagecoach Glasgow companies together operate 400 buses in Glasgow, Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway and the island of Arran. It also was judged the best large operator, with Newquay, Cornwall-based Western Greyhound — with about a 10th of the number of buses as the victorious Stagecoach fleet — named best smaller fleet.

Judges commended Stagecoach West Scotland for its continuous programme to improve customer, community and staff relations as well as for its success in expanding its network of urban, interurban and rural services, and increasing the number of passengers carried. The awards are judged partly by mystery shoppers, and in this case the well-maintained fleet, service reliability and enthusiasm of the company's operating staff impressed the secret passenger.

Thamesdown Transport managing director John Owen, who chairs the awards, says: 'Achieving success on both a rural and urban service demands commitment and enthusiasm from all concerned so it's not surprising that Stagecoach West Scotland has good customer relations and employee support and development.

'Stagecoach also works closely with local authorities, business and community to tackle issues such as vandalism and anti-social behaviour, all of which contributes to a better passenger experience.'

Stagecoach picked up four more awards — more than any other group. Its Waterden Road depot was named London Bus Garage of the Year, its Oxford Tube service won the Claudia Flanders Memorial Award for Accessibility, the group's 'Where you want to be?' telemarketing campaign to attract more people to bus travel was runner-up in the Bus Marketing Campaign of the Year category and Stagecoach North West received a special commendation in the social responsibility category for its response to the Carlisle floods.

Wilts & Dorset won the marketing award for its £4 million 'More' relaunch of services in Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch, which has increased revenue and passenger numbers by 50%. First Aberdeen won the Innovation Award for its work in trying to change children's attitude towards bus travel, while Brighton & Hove Bus & Coach and Brighton & Hove City Council shared the Successful Partnership Award for growing bus use over the past 10 years.

Above: One of the non-standard vehicles in the Stagecoach Western fleet, ex-AA buses Alexander Strider-bodied Scania L113CRL 28955 (M100 AAB), operating a Dumfries town service.

Left: Western Greyhound forward entrance ex-British European Airways AEC Routemaster 2648 (NMY 648E) at Travarrian last summer. As a senior director of a major bus group pointed this out to us the last time we published a picture of this bus, it has a London Transport private hire blind in the intermediate destination box. STEVE MASKELL

COASTLINER TOPS PROFITS LEAGUE FOR THIRD SUCCESSIVE YEAR

Blazefield's 20-vehicle Yorkshire Coastliner subsidiary was Britain's most profitable bus company for the third successive year.

The annual *Bus Industry Monitor* from the TAS Partnership shows that the company, which runs a modern fleet of low-floor buses on the corridors between Leeds and the North Yorkshire coast, made a 27.4% profit margin in 2004. National Express Group-owned Travel West Midlands was next with a 20.8% margin, but while sister company Travel Dundee was fourth with an 18.5% margin, NatEx's then newly acquired Travel London business was the nation's worst performer — with a 27.9% loss margin.

Third best was the Barton part of Trent Barton (19.4% profit margin) and First South Yorkshire was fifth best at 17.9%. Second, third and fourth biggest loss makers were Arriva Colchester (15.9% margin and since sold to Tellings-Golden Miller), London Sovereign (13.9%) and the smallest council-owned company, Islwyn Borough Transport (5.7%).

TAS says that Arriva's best and worst performing companies are both former municipal undertakings — best is Derby (16.5% profit margin), worst is Southend (2.5% loss), which helps explain the transfer of expensive-to-finance newer vehicles away to other group fleets. First's worst was Devon & Cornwall (5.1% loss), while Stagecoach's best was Busways (15.4% profit) and its worst was Devon (0.8% loss).

While the situation will have changed in 2005, the latest results from FirstGroup (see p8) show that it is likely to continue a downward trend in bus company profits. Compared with the previous year, TAS's Chris Cheek says the average operating profit margin of the 130 companies in the survey fell from 10.3% to 9.9%. Labour costs per employee rose by an average of 7.9% — and by 9.7% in London.

FIRST'S UK BUS PROFITS FALL DESPITE FARES HIKES

FirstGroup's latest financial results — for the six month period to 30 September — show a sharp fall in its UK bus profits.

Even though it collected 4.3% more fares revenue on its 9,300 buses than in the same period in 2004 (up £20million to £493.6million), operating profit fell by 17.6% to £40.7million. The operating profit margin fell from 10.4% to 8.2% before taking account of another £4.5million in operating leases.

Finance director Dean Finch blames this mainly on fuel costs and wage settlements above inflation. Several first companies have suffered strikes as part of a concerted campaign by the Transport & General Workers Union. A long running dispute at First Potteries was settled in November by a 21.2% three-year deal backdated to 1 April. First Aberdeen drivers held strikes in December.

First has been hit badly by the sharp rise in oil prices, but says its it has fully hedged its fuel purchases for the rest of the year to 31 March at $38 a barrel.

Chief executive Moir Lockhead says it was able to partly mitigate the effects of the fuel and wage rises through 'revenue growth initiatives, cost reductions through further operational efficiencies and pricing'.

'While we continue to face margin pressure in UK Bus, our priority is to achieve sustainable profit growth and continue to bear down on costs and drive more efficient processes and higher productivity,' he says. One example of what this means is that First Potteries is cutting Chester and Wirral services in January, with four routes axed altogether and others losing evening journeys. Fares have risen by around 25% in a year and fuel costs by £1million. 'The impact of these cost increases has led to a thorough review and consolidation of the entire Chester network,' says commercial director Paul De Santis.

First spent £52.1million on new buses over the six months, concentrating them where local authorities are committed to investing in public transport. 'We have continued to see strong revenue growth in those towns and cities where we are able to work with local authorities to provide bus services alongside traffic management schemes to tackle congestion,' says Moir Lockhead.

Right: During the six months to September, First increased its presence in West Yorkshire by taking over the services and some vehicles of Morley-based Black Prince. The only single-decker acquired was East Lancs Flyte-bodied Scania L113CRL 64808 (P818 AWT). DANIEL STAZICKER

VIRTUAL DRIVING AT WILLESDEN JUNCTION

First London claims to have the first driver simulator of its kind in Europe and says the unit — at its Willesden Junction garage — is superior even to the few in the United States.

It has been developed by FAAC, a subsidiary of Arotech, with actual bus components supplied by Wrightbus and Volvo. It will be used to give new drivers an introduction to bus driving in a more relaxed and controlled manner than is possible with a real bus and will also be used to retrain existing drivers. Its greatest advantage is that if drivers make a mistake like in cutting a corner, they and the instructors can go back on the simulator and repeat exactly the same situation.

The simulator is based on the full-width front end of a Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-decker complete with front doors, mirrors and all working controls. A glance in the internal mirror will show the rest of the interior of whatever bus the trainee is driving; it can replicate a single-decker, an empty double-decker, a fully laden double-decker (in which case it rolls realistically on bends) or an articulated bus.

It simulates open country roads, motorways with turn-offs, suburban roads, a bus garage (Westbourne Park) or a bus station (Walthamstow). On to this can be added a sudden rainfall, or snow or ice, while the roads can be deserted or congested. Wild cards can also be introduced, with taxis cutting in, cyclists wobbling or an engine fire. All this happens while the driver is driving, with an instructor alongside. Whatever happens is totally realistic, so much so that when one driver took a tight corner too quickly, an observer standing alongside grabbed a handrail to prevent himself falling.

Left: *Buses* In London columnist John Aldridge takes to the virtual road in First's simulator. STEPHEN MORRIS

AIRCOACH DEMANDS ACCESS TO BELFAST TERMINAL

Aircoach, First's Republic of Ireland subsidiary, has asked the Office of Fair Trading to intervene in its campaign for access to state-owned Translink's Europa Bus Centre in Belfast.

Although Translink permits Bus Éireann and Lough Swilly to use the facility for their joint services into Belfast, Aircoach has to pick up and set down passengers in the street outside. Aircoach managing director Marc Reddy says: 'It is quite clear that despite our best efforts to come to an agreement with Translink over Aircoach's denied access to the bus station, Translink has no interest in finding a resolution. Its refusal . . . is absolutely anti-competitive.'

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers

For more details of the benefits of membership of Britain's largest Bus enthusiast society, or our latest sales list, why not check out the web site, or alternatively send a large stamp addressed envelope to:

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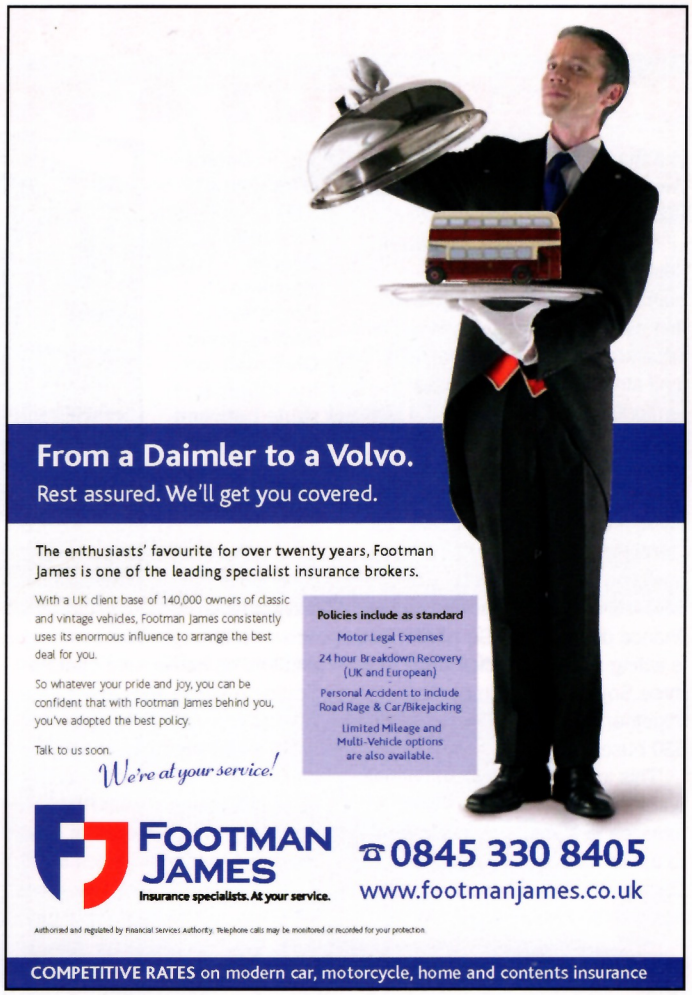
- **London Bus Magazine** (no. 133) includes articles entitled *Declaring Independents* which looks at independent operators in the London area, *On the London Road in Leicester* which is a review of former London buses in Leicester, as well as the usual *Around & About* quarterly review and book reviews. Our quarterly glossy magazine is now **full colour** (except where we have historical articles) and in this issue also illustrates the last days of the Olympian, route X26 a new livery in Crawley and much much more. £5.00 (£4.00 to members).

- **London Buses in 2004** - is a review of the routes, vehicles, operators, significant events as well as the politics that make up the story that was 2004. Included are Armchair, fuel cell buses, Routemaster 50, Thorpes, the special operations to commemorate last days of crew operation, goodbye to the Metrobus, all over adverts and Bendybuses; 60 pages fully illustrated in colour - £7.00 (£6.00 to members).

- For the **QUICKEST** and **MOST UPTO-DATE** information on the ever changing London bus scene members of LOTS receive our monthly Newsletter, The London Bus (TLB), which in one illustrated Newsletter covers all the current operators in the former London Transport area.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Oh yes, and Chris Moyes bares his soul about his passions and his particular, even peculiar interest in buses. If it's good enough for him, we reckon you'll enjoy it, too.
NEW
RELEASES ISSUE 7 2005

GO-AHEAD PUTS VECTIS AND BLUE LINE UNDER WILTS & DORSET CONTROL

In a major restructure, Go-Ahead Group has put its recently acquired Southern Vectis and Solent Blue Line companies under the overall control of the Wilts & Dorset management team, but it stresses that all three companies will remain separate with their own identities, staff structures and operating territories.

With effect from 1 December, W&D managing director Alex Carter, operations director Andrew Wickham and engineering director Geoff Parsons have held the same positions at Southern Vectis and Solent Blue Line. Colin McPherson, finance director with Go North East, is acting finance director for all three South Coast companies. Together, these three fleets operate 530 buses.

'This is an opportunity to improve and invest in the quality of bus services to encourage more people to opt for bus travel,' says Alex Carter. 'We can assure everyone that the Go-Ahead Group will continue to promote the networks through local branding and trading names and operate Southern Vectis and Solent Blue Line as separate companies.'

Southern Vectis managing director Alan White has become general manager, while Phil Stockley, his counterpart at Solent Blue Line, has been made area director for the Solent operations, with both being responsible for operational and commercial matters.

We understand that Go-Ahead sees opportunities to enhance financial and operational performance by increasing co-operation between the companies, especially behind the scenes, and the creation of the common management team should speed this process.

Right: Solent Blue Line 819 (N411 JBV), an ex-London Central Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympian, on the Bluestar 1 route between Southampton and Winchester. MARK LYONS

■ Govia, the joint venture owned 65% by Go-Ahead and 35% by the Anglo-French Keolis company (which has a stake in Eastbourne Buses), has won the six-year Integrated Kent train operating franchise. It takes over from state-owned South Eastern Trains on 1 April and will be granted an automatic two-year extension if it achieves performance targets.

Below: Go-Ahead companies are showing increasing interest in the Mercedes-Benz Citaro, with examples destined for Wilts & Dorset and Solent Blue Line. These are two of the W&D examples — in predominantly blue livery for More-branded high-frequency routes and predominantly red for other work — awaiting delivery from the Mercedes factory in Mannheim. DICK DANNENFELD

WA SHEARINGS ROLLS OUT NEW IMAGE

WA Shearings, the combined Shearings and Wallace Arnold coach holiday business, has published its first single brochure and has started repainting its fleet into a single livery. Following last year's merger, although the Wallace Arnold coach fleet gained Shearings legal lettering and fleetnumbers, the two fleets otherwise retained their identities, with WA logos applied to Shearings coach windscreens and Shearings names going on to Wallace Arnold windscreens.

Now that the tours are being sold from one brochure, the company has adopted a single identity in which the Shearings name and its aquamarine colour are dominant. However, there is more orange than before, reflecting the dominance of that colour on Wallace Arnold coaches. The comparatively few new coaches ordered for 2006 follow the different specifications of the two companies.

Left: 701 (MX05 AFU), a Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B12M, in the WA Shearings identity. JOHN MARSH

DIARY DATES

14 January Stockport: Omnibus Society, North West & Yorkshire Branch. Talk by Fred Kennington on pre-deregulation experiences with United Auto, Middlesbrough Corporation, Selnec and Greater Manchester Transport, 14.00, Friends Meeting House, Cooper Street. Bus 192 to Longshut Lane.

21 January Nottingham: Omnibus Society, Midland Branch. Keynote address by James Freeman, managing director Stagecoach East, 14.00, Meeting Room, First Floor, Lenton Abbey (Toby Inn), A52/A6464 junction, Lenton Abbey roundabout. Nottingham City Transport Orange Line 36 stops outside.

Newcastle upon Tyne: Omnibus Society, Northern Branch. Talk by David Holding on South Wales independents, 13.30, Brunswick Methodist Centre (behind Fenwick's).

31 January London: Omnibus Society, presidential address by Chris Moyes, chief executive, Go-Ahead Group, 18.45, London Underground headquarters, 55 Broadway (St James's Park station).

ALEXANDER DENNIS CLAIMS HUGE EURO4 FUEL SAVINGS

Alexander Dennis says its first Euro4-engined buses are showing net reductions of between 5 and 13% in fuel consumption over their Euro3 counterparts.

Until now, one of the downsides of the moves to lower emission levels has been an increase in fuel consumption, but early evidence from re-powered buses is that the new generation of Cummins ISBe4 engines reverses that trend.

Six buses — four Tridents and two Darts operated by Stagecoach London, Metroline, London United and Travel West Midlands — have been fitted with the new, higher capacity engines and further trials are to be conducted in a First Wyvern Enviro300 single-decker. The Darts' 3.9litre four-cylinder ISBe engines were replaced by the 4.5litre Euro4 equivalent, while the six-cylinder 6.7litre ISBe4 replaces the 5.9litre ISBe in the Enviro300 and the soon-to-be-discontinued 8.3litre ISCe in the Trident.

After six months, the trials are showing the most dramatic fuel savings are being made on the Tridents, which benefit from the lighter weight of the physically smaller ISBe4 as well as from the improvements in combustion.

Alexander Dennis chassis sales manager Andy Boulton says that the average net saving in fuel consumption on three of the Tridents is 13% after taking account of the need to use AdBlue fuel additive in the Cummins selective catalytic reduction (SCR) engines. On the Darts, the net reduction is 5%.

He says there should be further savings as service intervals on the Tridents can be extended from eight to 12 weeks on ISCe-engined buses to at least 16 weeks, and the ISBe4 engines require less oil. Over 12 years, he predicts that a Euro4 Trident will cost £36.000 less to operate than a Euro3 model and that the saving on Darts will be £8,750 over the same period. 'Operators will be saving the best part of half of a Trident's chassis price,' he says.

The move to the lighter engine also means that the new Enviro400 double-decker will be able to accommodate four more standing passengers than initial production versions with Euro3 engines.

The new in line-engined midibus that Alexander Dennis is developing for a launch next spring — referred to last summer by the working title of Enviro200SPD, but apparently now to be given a name with Dart in it — will have a choice of four and six-cylinder ISBe4 engines in all lengths, as well as other features like all-round disc brakes.

A 300hp ISBe4 will go into the Euro4 version of the Javelin coach in place of the 275hp ISBe, but Andy Boulton says options are still being considered for the future of the Dennis R-series coach, currently powered by the 11litre Cummins ISMe. One of these would be to use the 8.9litre Cummins ISLe4, which may also replace the ISMe in the tri-axle Enviro500 double-decker.

All ISBe4 engines for Alexander Dennis, Optare and VDL buses will be built at the Cummins plant in Darlington. This factory originally built the V6 engines used in the Daimler Roadliner when it opened in July 1965 to provide new employment in an area suffering from the rundown of its traditional railway industry. Today, its 842 employees produce around 60,000 ISBe and ISCe engines a year, 43% of them for bus, truck and construction plant manufacturers in the UK. Darlington also produces the ISCe engines that Chinese manufacturer King Long fits in coaches exported to Europe.

Above and below: Travel West Midlands 4586(BU04 BKZ), a Trident with ALX400 body, has a 6.7litre ISBe4 engine in place of its original ISCe.

Right: Buses with SCR engines need a second tank for AdBlue fuel additive. On the TWM Trident, the AdBlue filler nozzle is in the red stripe behind the front offside wheel, while the diesel filler is behind the cab window, above the fleetnumber.

IN *BUSES* NEXT MONTH

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Picture by MARK LYONS

NEW BUS STATIONS OPEN IN BRISTOL AND LIVERPOOL

The initial phase of First's new Bristol bus station has been completed, with many services using it in place of temporary facilities.

Work began in April 2004, and the completion of the first phase sees the opening of many improved passenger facilities such as public toilets, vending machines for refreshments and new bus and coach ticket sales offices. A new café and newsagent's shop have yet to open and it will be next summer before the adjacent court buildings are completed and some services finally stop using bus stops in nearby streets.

A new walkway leads direct to Broadmead shopping centre through St James churchyard.

In Liverpool, Merseytravel opened its new Paradise Street bus station on 14 November. It is located farther down Paradise Street — behind the Merseyside Police headquarters and opposite the Albert Dock — and is the first part of the Paradise shopping complex, which is being built over the previous bus station. Most of the building is glass and — as with the Bristol bus station — automatic doors open when a bus arrives on the stand.

Above: Inside the new Bristol bus station.

Left: Arriva North West 2433 (X433 HJA), a Wright Cadet-bodied DAF SB120, in the new Paradise Street bus station. MAT SOUTHART

WARRINGTON STARTS PARK-&-RIDE

The first proper park-&-ride service in Warrington was provided over the two months to New Year's Eve.

The free weekend service — operated by Warrington Borough Transport — was supported by WBT, Warrington Borough Council and the Northwest Regional Development Agency, providing connections between the town centre and the NWDA car park at the Centre Park development. The service compensates for the loss of car parking capacity during construction of the Golden Square redevelopment, which incorporates the new town centre bus station.

Saturday operation began on 31 October, with three of the latest batch of Merit Midis — Wright-bodied VDL SB120s — operating every 7 to 8min from 10.00 until 18.00, and continues until 31 December. The Sunday service began on 20 November, using two vehicles on a 10min headway from 10.00 until 17.00; it finishes on 18 December.

WBT has also registered a replacement for the 386 (Warrington-Leigh) service, which Arriva North West is giving up after Christmas and which First Manchester operated before that. It is a vestige of the old Leigh Corporation route 46, which became 586 in the Selnec renumbering. WBT already has the contract for the evening service, which is still numbered 586 and is inter-worked with WBT's 19 (Warrington-Leigh via Winwick) service.

Bdlow: Warrington Borough Transport Merit Midi 51 (DK55 HMO) in a disturbingly car-free park-&-ride car park shortly after the new service began. NICK THOMSON

ROUTEMASTER BOOK WINNERS

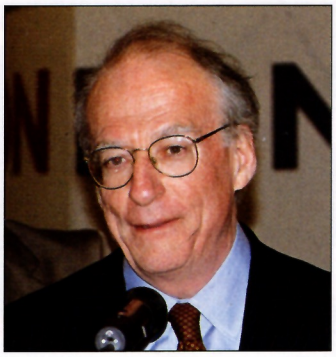
The five winners of our November competition to win *The Bus We Loved*, Travis Elborough's delightful book about the London Routemaster, were Julian Dolman of Sleaford; Derek Higgs of Dartford; Andrew Potts of Ringwood North, Australia; Chris Stewart of Shenfield; and J. Whiteing of Huddersfield. The publisher, Granta Books, will send your prizes direct.

Congratulations to all of you and to all who knew that the correct answers were that RM1 first ran in passenger service in 1956, that an RM-type Routemaster has 64 seats and that the last Routemaster (RML2760) was built in 1968.

■ **Win one of six Enviro400 diecasts, see p33**

Right: The third batch of Mercedes-Benz Citaros for Go-Ahead's Oxford Bus Company — branded for city route 2 — entered service on 2 December in a variation of the Best Impressions-designed livery for the Citaros used on the Oxford-Abingdon corridor. BEN MORROLL

COMMISSIONER KILEY QUITS TOP LONDON POST



London's transport commissioner, **Bob Kiley** *(right)*, is stepping down on 31 January. He accepted a four-year renewal of his contract almost a year ago, which would have seen him stay in post until the end of 2008, but in a statement issued on 24 November, he said: 'I have decided it is the right time for me to step down.

'It has been a privilege to serve as London's first ever Commissioner for Transport. TfL has more than proved it can deliver since it was formed five years ago. I thank [Mayor] Ken Livingstone for the opportunity to start rebuilding this great city's transport network. Above all, I thank all the employees of Transport for London for their professionalism. I will never forget their commitment to London during the morning of 7 July and in the days and weeks that followed.'

The Mayor has declined to comment further, despite press speculation that the commissioner — an American citizen who was previously with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority and reputedly earned £698,671 in 2004/05 — resigned following a serious disagreement. London press reports say he will be retained as a consultant until 2008.

This has provided fuel for the Labour Mayor's Conservative opponents on the Greater London Authority, with their transport spokesman, Roger Evans, saying: 'We always had serious concerns about Bob Kiley's value for money. After all, he was one of the highest paid public sector bureaucrats in the world. However, we need to know specifically why he quit. Ken Livingstone personally brought Bob Kiley to London showering him with praise. How did relations sour so much that Ken Livingstone's golden boy has failed?'.

LONDON UNITED MD TAKES ON GROUP ROLE

Charlie Beaumont *(pictured)*, managing director of London United and London Sovereign, is moving into a new role as UK chief operating officer with Transdev, their French parent company.

He will have overall responsibility for all Transdev bus and tram businesses in the UK. Initially, that takes in the Nottingham Express Transit tram system as well as the two London bus companies. But the group also is preferred bidder to buy a majority shareholding in Yellow Buses from Bournemouth Council and is the operating partner in the planned two-line tram system for Edinburgh, currently the only new British tramway with any chance of early implementation.

Transdev intends to appoint a new London MD to succeed Charlie Beaumont, who continues in his other role as UK deputy chief executive to **Francois-Xavier Perin**.

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ARNOLD RICHARDSON, PHOTOBUS FOUNDER, DIES AGE 67

One of the best known and most widely liked traders in the bus enthusiast market, **Arnold Richardson** of Photobus, died on 10 November. He was 67 and had been diagnosed around three months earlier with cancer of the pancreas.

He and his wife Monica were familiar figures at many bus rallies and museum open days around the country, and it is Monica's and their family's intention that the business — a major archive of road passenger transport history — should continue.

One of six brothers, he was born in 1939 into a mining family in Chilton, Co. Durham and joined the National Coal Board as a trainee mining surveyor after leaving Spennymoor Grammar School. With coal mining in decline, he moved into civil engineering, working on major projects like motorway and gas pipeline construction. He and his family lived in Lancashire, then in Cumbria and moved to the Cotswolds in 2003 to be nearer their son Stephen and daughter-in-law Jane. He was delighted when he located ideal storage facilities for the photographs in a building on a nearby estate owned by Lord Vestey.

A lifelong enthusiast and long-time member of the Omnibus Society, he was 11 when he began taking bus photographs in Newcastle upon Tyne. His first interest was in United Automobile Services, where his brother Denis worked, and he retained membership of the United Enthusiasts Club. Along with Tony Blackman, he helped preserve a Wigan Corporation Leyland Titan PD1, JP 6032.

His interest developed into collecting bus and tram photographs and, eventually, setting up Photobus in the 1970s as a mail order business, with Monica as its manager. By a combination of borrowing and acquiring original material, this grew into a collection well in excess of 200,000 colour and black-and-white photographs. More recently, he collaborated with the Online Transport Archive to broaden the collection with photographs that included those bequeathed by the late Reg Wilson.

Pictures from his archives have illustrated many books and magazines and in 1999 he teamed up with his friend Stuart Bell to source pictures for and publish *The MacBraynes Book*, which placed the operations of that unique company among the people and landscape of the western Highlands and Islands.

A charming, friendly, cultured and principled man, he held his countless customers in high regard and looked after the interests of the photographers who entrusted their collections to his safe keeping. When old age and infirmity, inevitably, limited some of those photographers' faculties or mobility, he ensured that reproduction royalties still reached them any time their pictures were published.

He also possessed a literally photographic memory of the collection. If we asked him for a picture, he came up with the goods. If we used a Photobus picture and wanted to know the photographer's name, he invariably knew simply from a brief description over the phone. It also was typical of his generous nature that, when *Buses* published a photographic tribute to the late Gordon Jamieson of Shetland a few months ago, Arnold contacted us to insist — ironically given his own subsequent illness — that the fees be donated to cancer charities.

The photographs in question were taken by one of today's still active photographers, Roy Marshall, who describes him as 'a great man and a true friend'. 'Nothing was too much trouble for him and he helped me by transporting negatives and prints between myself and his printers, from whom he expected high standards, ' he says.

Another friend, Bob Kell, says: 'Arnold will be literally irreplaceable. His friendly approach to all, his wide knowledge of enthusiasts and their particular interests meant that he could — and did — spend considerable time to find that special or elusive vehicle for his customers, which transcended business. Many have had their life and interests enhanced by his presence.'

Bus author Mike Eyre recalls how Arnold coped with the devastating news that his illness was terminal: 'He phoned and told me about the cancer but didn't want anyone else to know. He was typically matter of fact about it — and brave. "I'm an engineer. I've seen the scans" — jokingly he called them the design drawings — "and I know the score. Two years if I'm lucky, few weeks if I'm not." He then got on and sold their lovely cottage so that Monica could, in due course, find somewhere else. He was a man to admire. I shall miss him.'

■ **In memory of Arnold: Pictureview, p36**

STAGECOACH REACHES £95MILLION DEAL TO SELL NZ BUSES

As foreshadowed last month, Stagecoach has pulled out of New Zealand, selling its bus and trolleybus operations in Wellington and its bus and ferry operations in Auckland for around £95 million — £20 million more than Stagecoach paid for the various businesses.

The buyer is Infratil, a New Zealand investment company with interests mainly in infrastructure and utility assets. Infratil bought Prestwick Airport in Ayrshire from Stagecoach — the UK group's only venture into that market — in January 2001, and one of its largest shareholders has its own interest in the GoBus operation in Hamilton, New Zealand.

Stagecoach has around 365 buses and trolleybuses in Wellington, where it has been operating since Wellington City Transport was privatised in 1992, and another 658 in Auckland. The terms of the sale allow Infratil to use the Stagecoach name and its striped livery for up to five years.

Explaining the deal, Stagecoach chief executive Brian Souter says: 'The group's New Zealand operations have been tremendously successful under our ownership, delivering excellent financial returns. We received an approach about the possible sale of the business and, after assessing Infratil's offer and the prospects for the New Zealand operations, we concluded that the disposal was in the best interests of our shareholders.

Above: The last new buses for Stagecoach New Zealand were 96 of these Designline-bodied MAN 17.223 citybuses delivered in 2004/05. Most, like this one, went to Auckland. DANIEL STAZICKER

'We remain focused on our strategy of maximising shareholder value from the group's portfolio of bus and rail businesses through organic growth and we are continuing to explore the potential for complementary acquisitions in the UK and North American bus markets.'

LA BUSWAY OPENS FOR BUSINESS

Thirty gas-fuelled tram-styled NABI 60-BRT articulated buses began operating the North Hollywood to Woodland Hills Metro Orange Line in Los Angeles on 29 October. The 14-mile exclusive busway opened to the public with free rides and community festivities at many of the purpose built stations along the route through the San Fernando Valley. The 901 route parallels Highway 101, a notoriously congested freeway, so most stations have park-&-ride facilities as well as ticket vending machines, 24hr video surveillance with passenger assistance and public phones, lighting, seating and public address system and public phones. At North Hollywood, it connects with the light rail Red Line to downtown LA.

The 60ft artics have 57 seats and cost over $700 000 each, but early reports suggest that the ride is not as smooth as a tram. Although the route misses out some would-be passenger objectives like a major retail area that it passes without stopping, by midday on the launch day queues to try out the service were akin to those for San Francisco's cable cars.

A further 170 similar buses are due for additional Metro busways and existing high-volume Metro Rapid routes.

Left: Rear view of one of the new BRT buses leaving an Orange Line halt. MARTIN ISLES

BIG BUS COMPANY SETS UP IN BALTIMORE

The London-based Big Bus Company has set up its second United States open-top sightseeing tour business in Baltimore, Maryland.

It is being run by Paul Wallace, who spent many years with Guide Friday in the UK, then set up Full Circle Tours in Oxford, before selling that operation to City Sightseeing. Big Bus already operates tours of Philadelphia and has another overseas operation in Dubai.

Left: SBS Transit, the Singapore bus and metro operator, has begun to take delivery of 150 low-floor Volvo B9TLs with air-conditioned bodies assembled by sister company ComfortDelGro Engineering. DAVE ROGERS

VANCOUVER EVALUATES 10 LOW-EMISSION BUSES

TransLink, the transport authority for the Canadian city of Vancouver, has embarked on a six-month evaluation of five pairs of alternative fuel and ultra low emission buses.

It will compare the performance and fuel consumption of two diesel-electric hybrids, two compressed natural gas buses, two fuelled with a blend of 20% bio-diesel and 80% normal diesel, two NovaBUS diesel buses with particulate filters and two standard diesel buses.

The test buses will operate out of its Coast Mountain Bus Company's Port Coquitlam depot and will alternate between eight bus routes. Customers will have a chance to ride the buses and tell TransLink what they think through on-board surveys.

'TransLink expects to purchase more than 1,000 buses over the next eight years, and results from this test programme will help us identify the most suitable and cost-effective technology to service the region,' says TransLink chairman Doug McCallum. 'In particular, we're looking for buses that are a good fit for the unique weather and terrain of the Greater Vancouver region.' Meanwhile, it has been testing the first pilot vehicle for its new fleet of 188 12m New Flyer E40LF and 40 articulated 18m E60LF low-floor trolleybuses, so that any obvious problems can be solved before production of the others begins towards the end of 2006. All have the same 240kW Kiepe traction motors, so the 12m vehicles will be governed down to maintain a comfortable speed.

Right: The pilot New Flyer E40LF trolleybus for Vancouver on one of its first days in passenger service in September. MARTIN WRIGHT

SUPERSIZE CITARO IS NEW MERCEDES FLAGSHIP

Mercedes-Benz has come up with its biggest-ever version of the Citaro, the four-axle, 19.5m articulated CapaCity, in an apparent bid to compete with the double-artics and rigid-trailer combinations gaining popularity in Germany.

The low-floor CapaCity artic boasts four doors and space for a total of 193 passengers — nearly 50 more than conventional Mercedes and MAN artics. It uses the 354hp version of the 12litre OM457hLA engine.

Thanks to its four axles, two of which are steering, and a single articulation joint, the model boasts a turning circle of 22.85m. Mercedes says this makes the CapaCity as easy and as safe to handle as the three-axle Citaro currently in widespread use across mainland Europe and in London. The CapaCity looks futuristic with the wheels on the non-steering axles hidden behind panels and the black-painted sections of the side windows extending down as far as the wheel arches.

It also has a device to control the pitching and rolling body movements more noticeable in articulated buses. This was first tried out in the Citaro rigid fuel cell buses because of their high roof loads.

The maximum permitted length of buses in Germany — and in the rest of the European Union — is 18.75m, so Mercedes has obtained special permission to run the CapaCity in five federal states. The model comes at a time when many urban European operators are keen to provide the same carrying capacity with fewer buses and avoid expensive infrastructure costs such as converting bus stops.

Above and right: Exterior and interior views of the CapaCity, showing the boxed-in non-steering rear wheels and the sets of back-to-back seats over those wheels.

Hamburg has recently bought 10 Van Hool AGG300 double-artics, but was pipped at the post as the first German municipal to deploy the type as Aachen's ASEAG undertaking placed two similar Van Hools in service in late autumn.

NEW YORK RACES AHEAD WITH HYBRID BUSES

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority plans to more than double its fleet of hybrid diesel-electric buses within 18 months.

The MTA has ordered an additional 500 Orion VII hybrids from DaimlerChrysler, which will increase the hybrid fleet to 825 buses by the middle of 2007, with an option to take a further 389.

At the heart of the hybrid Orion VII is the HybriDrive propulsion system provided by BAE Systems of Johnson City, New York. This propels the bus with a single electric motor powered by a diesel-driven generator. In place of a typically large diesel engine, the unit in this heavy-duty transit bus is a 5.9litre Cummins ISB, similar to that in the Dennis Dart, which provides the generating power that also charges the system's batteries. The batteries are the source of additional electrical power for high demand situations, such as fast starts and hill climbs.

Left: One of 200 Orion VII diesel-electric hybrids delivered to MTA in 2005 operating Manhattan route M4 along Fifth Avenue. MIKE WALKER

TFL PREPARES FOR WEST LONDON C-CHARGE

Transport for London has revealed its proposed bus service enhancements to cope with additional demand when the congestion charge zone is extended west to Kensington and Chelsea from February 2007.

Subject to consultation, which ends on 23 January, there will be one new route, two others will be double-decked, six are extended and 15 gain frequency increases. Between 2,600 and 3,700 extra passengers are expected in the busiest hour of the morning peak, when TfL aims to provide the room for 4,800.

The highest morning peak increase in passenger numbers is expected in west to east movements and several of the service enhancements will parallel the Central Line, which presumably lacks the necessary capacity for all the additional passengers.

However, the new route — with double-deckers — will be the 452 (Wandsworth Road Station-Kensal Rise Station), running north/south every 7 to 8min. It will follow the route of the 137 (Oxford Circus-Streatham Hill) via Chelsea Bridge and Sloane Square to Knightsbridge, then pick up the 52 (Victoria-Willesden Garage) via Kensington Gore, Kensington Church Street, Notting Hill Gate and Ladbroke Grove to Kensal Rise.

As a consequence, there will be some reductions on the 52, from 12 or 15 buses an hour in the morning peak to 10 or 12; the higher frequencies refer to frequency at the height of the peak. Similarly, the 137 drops from 10 or 17 buses an hour to 10 or 12.

The two routes to be converted to double-deckers are the 319 (Sloane Square-Streatham Hill) and C3 (Clapham Junction-Earl's Court), the C3 increasing from six to eight buses an hour.

The 28 (Wandsworth-Harrow Road) will be extended from Harrow Road (Prince of Wales) to Kensal Rise Station; the 31 (Camden Town-Notting Hill Gate) to Shepherd's Bush Green; the 44 (Tooting-Vauxhall) rerouted at Battersea and extended to Victoria; the 46 (Farringdon Street-Warwick Avenue) extended to Paddington and Lancaster Gate; the 430 (Roehampton-West Brompton) to South Kensington Station; and the C1 (Victoria-Kensington High Street) diverted short of Kensington High Street to run via Olympia and the Blythe Road area (currently unserved by buses) to Shepherd's Bush and White City. Shepherd's Bush is likely to see growth with a big new shopping centre under construction and a new West London Line national rail station also planned.

All told, there will higher frequencies on 12 routes, plus one or two extra peak hour journeys on a further five. By far the biggest frequency increase is on the 16 (Cricklewood-Victoria), up from eight to 12 buses an hour in the daytime; in the early 1930s, it ran every 1.5min — that's 40 buses an hour. The 14 (Putney Heath-Tottenham Court Road) rises from 10 to 13 an hour. And the 27 (Chalk Farm-Turnham Green) rises from six to eight or more.

Among routes serving the east/west corridor is the 148 (Shepherd's Bush-Camberwell Green), one of the most successful introductions from the central area congestion charge. Some other improvements from that scheme will also be of benefit this time round.

Above: National Car Parks' new NCP Challenger operation took over route 33 (Fulwell-Hammersmith) from London United on 12 November, using Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts. This is NCP23 (SN55 DVR) in Stanley Road, Teddington. GEOFF RIXON

SHORT HOPS

Buses will replace Jubilee Line trains from 26-30 December while an extra carriage is added to each train. Buses and coaches from a large number of operators replaced Northern Line trains on special routes in late-October.

A poster campaign with the slogan 'It's up to all of us' has been launched on buses and trains urging the public to take extra care with their belongings and to be vigilant in looking out for possible terrorists.

Two of a series of four posters advertising OysterCards were withdrawn after complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority that they implied the cards were a like-for-like alternative to a One-Day Travelcard.

London Central and London General staff have been issued with a stylish jacket which, when turned inside out, becomes a high-visibility vest.

Camberwell magistrates have jailed for three months a man who used threatening behaviour towards a revenue protection inspector on a route 436 articulated bus.

METROBUS TAKES OVER CENTRA CONTRACT

Metrobus took over route 127 (Purley-Tooting) from Centra, currently the worst performing contractor in Transport for London's punctuality league, on 10 December. The contract had another five months to run. It has reverted to double-deckers — initially Plaxton-bodied Volvo B7TLs lent by sister company London General and surplus there after Travel London took over route 188 (Russell Square-North Greenwich) on 3 December. **Travel London** has been awarded the contract for new route 129 (North Greenwich [Millennium Dome]-Greenwich Town Centre), which starts on 3 June with a peak requirement of four new single-deckers; the peak requirement increases in 2008 when it will be extended to Peckham. Travel London also retains Richmond area route R61 with two existing single-deckers; this is renumbered 481 when the new contract starts on 6 May.

At the same time, **Armchair** (now owned by Metroline) takes over the 485 (Richmond-Wandsworth) from London General, with a peak requirement of three new single-deckers.

New route 498 (Romford-Brentwood), with three new single-deckers, begins on Boxing Day. This contract was awarded to **Arriva Kent Thameside**, but will be operated by Arriva Southend's Grays garage.

Stagecoach Selkent has retained the contract for route 53/N53 (Whitehall-Plumstead Station) with a peak requirement of 26 existing double-deckers on weekdays and 27 on Saturdays. The new contract begins next summer.

EARLY OBSOLESCENCE HERALDED AS KEN LAUNCHES HERITAGE RMs

The biggest revelation to emerge from the Trafalgar Square launch of heritage Routemaster part routes 9 (Aldwych-Royal Albert Hall) and 15 (Trafalgar Square-Tower Hill) on 14 November was nothing to do with Routemasters.

Mayor Ken Livingstone said that the life of a London bus was now between five and 10 years because improvements in engine emission levels made the older buses too polluting. So buses now being refurbished for contract renewals will have to be replaced around 2010 and where existing five-year contracts are being extended by two years, and new buses might be needed in 2007 or 2008.

By then, Optare's long promised side-engined flat-floor double-decker may be in production.

As for the Routemasters displayed for the launch, First's for the 9 and Stagecoach's for the 15 looked smart in their new coats of paint. That was remarkable in itself, as they were only released from working with Sovereign or Arriva London North two or three weeks before.

All are Marshall refurbished examples with Cummins Euro2 engines and original registrations. Transport for London owns them and leases them to the operators for a nominal £1 a year each. Even so, the heritage operation costs around £1 million a year, so one must hope that Londoners and tourists use them. There is a standard fare of £1.20 (£1.50 from January) and all passes, Oyster and Travelcards are valid. Side by side, the two operators' shades of red looked different. The Stagecoach one is darker, while the First one has a suggestion of orange in it. Without paint samples or scientific evidence, I would put First's nearer to the original London livery. Both buses had the mid-decks cream band used originally — but before anyone criticises the red variations, don't forget that for years London buses and tube trains wore different shades of red.

Left and below: Two of Stagecoach's vehicles on the heritage short-workings of the 15. TfL-owned RM2071 (ALM 71B) is bathed in sunshine on the first day, devoid of advertising pending the sale of space by contractor Viacom. A few days later, Stagecoach's own AEC-engined RML2760 (left) put in some appearances. JOHN G. LIDSTONE

In service, the Stagecoach buses look absolutely immaculate with gold fleetnumbers and London Transport fleetnames, while several of First's remain in more recent liveries with no central band, or have one in flake grey or yellow. One notable surprise performer (pending availability of all the refurbished buses) was Stagecoach's own preserved RML2760, the last built in 1968, which with its AEC engine is not to any Euro standard and won't consequently be a permanent feature.

The First buses are based at Westbourne Park, which until recently ran Routemasters, while Stagecoach's are at one of its two Waterden Road (Stratford) garages where the only other operational buses are articulated Citaros. No doubt attracted by the high rate of pay, the artic rota there is full, so any drivers wanting overtime or rest-day work will be on the Routemasters. Stagecoach, incidentally, found no difficulty in recruiting conductors, but finding drivers proved slower, despite the attractive hours — buses run only between 09.35 and 18.35 daily.

A nice touch by Stagecoach at the end of the press conference was to take reporters and cameramen to Tower Hill with the bus running in service and calling at all stops. The efficient conductress checked those with bus passes and charged £1.20 for those without, which included one or two high-ranking people who had forgotten to carry their passes.

The driver was new to the route, but drove skillfully and only missed one stop. He was Peter Hendy, TfL's managing director, surface transport. I wonder how many other senior personnel know even the central London routes so well?

LOW FLOOR CONVERSION VIRTUALLY COMPLETE

By the end of December, virtually all London buses will be low-floor. The only exceptions, apart from the two Routemaster heritage routes, are a few schooldays services.

Metroline has hired spare Dennis Tridents from First London for route 4 (Archway-Waterloo) to cover the delay in production of its new Alexander Dennis Enviro400s. It has also hired some Dennis Dart SLFs from London United for indirect replacement of the single-door Dart SLFs on the 214 (Liverpool Street-Highgate Village); new single-deckers are on order. Removal of the last Volvo Olympians on the 4 also means that for the first time in 58 years there will be no London double-deckers with adverts on the front.

London thus becomes the first major UK city with a virtually all low-floor fleet, a remarkable achievement when the first low-floor double-deckers only entered service in November 1998. Conversion of the 29 (at present Palmers Green-Trafalgar Square) to articulated Citaros in January will release low-floor double-deckers to work Arriva's schoolbus routes north of the Thames. Arriva London South retains a few Leyland/ECW Olympians (contrary to last month's *Buses* feature) to work route 604 (Thornton Heath Garage or Norwood Garage-Davidson Road, Stanley Technical High School) which low-floor buses cannot reach.

Below: A momentary piece of history at Tottenham Marshes garage, with newly retired Routemasters from the 38 in storage among new Arriva London North Mercedes-Benz Citaro bendibuses for the impending conversion of the 29. JOHN G. LIDSTONE

Waste, duplication and co-ordination failures

Why English local government needs to be reformed to help co-ordinate public transport services outside London

Now you might think that the headline above is a quote from either side of the great divide that is the current sterile debate between the PTEs and the big bus groups. But no, it is the description by none other than New Labour's local government minister of the present two-tier administrative structure that exists in England. Note that Scotland and Wales advanced beyond the historic *status quo* even before devolution.

Having revealed last time that I am partial to a little Simon and Garfunkel, I am now ready to tell you that I am also a fan of *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the late Douglas Adams's brilliant book, radio and TV series. From this it is easy to see the author's tilt at local government ineptitude as the Vogon spaceship prepares to destroy Earth to make way for an inter-galactic by-pass.

My home county of Hampshire is an excellent example of this two-tier dog's breakfast. Having now lost its principal urban areas (Portsmouth and Southampton) to unitary authorities, its third main centre of population remains divided between two of its own district councils and the two adjoining counties (Berkshire and Surrey) each of which, for good measure, involves one of its constituent districts. I refer to the Blackwater Valley, comprising Aldershot, Camberley, Farnborough, Farnham, Fleet, Sandhurst and Yateley (where I live). An area that cries out for sweeping reform and is perfectly suited to the kind of 'mobility company' I proposed in my November column.

Two recent events

Two recent events have led me to mention this part of the country – one of which highlights the archetypal problem of dividing responsibility for transport between two tiers of local government.

The headline screams 'Bye bye to bus lane'. Wonderful. We are told that a 'fiery local councillor is celebrating victory in her Farnborough bus lane battle'. I need not bore you with the detail — suffice it to say that Hampshire County Council installed the bus lane in question, but Rushmoor District Council (actually one or two of its more vociferous members) did not like it. The story actually turns on alleged (i.e. unproven) safety issues, but what I find fascinating is that the two protagonists appear not to have agreed all the necessary detail about the bus lane before it was put in.

The other event that relates to Blackwater Valley is the 40th birthday of the first German Verkehrsverbund that started life on 29 November 1965. Covering the city of Hamburg and its surrounding area, the HVV began with eight constituent rail, bus and ferry operators and involved three *Bundesländer* or regional governments plus four *Landkreisen* or district authorities, but today has 38 participating operators and serves two more districts.

You could, I suppose, say that HVV is the Greater Hamburg PTE, but unlike anything by that name in the UK it has grown public transport use by 32.6% between 1967 (406.1 million passengers) and 2004 (538.5 million).

What HVV set out to do was to make the state railway (DB) S-Bahn and Regionalbahn services and the city's U-Bahn and bus networks, plus all the other operators' individual bus routes, function as one simple system. Integrated, co-ordinated, memorable clockface timetables and a unified tariff with one ticket covering all modes have resulted in a public transport offer that genuinely competes with the car.

This is what the Blackwater Valley needs, not Primadonna acts discrediting the building blocks of better bus services.

Could we achieve the success of the Verkehrsverbund concept (there are now 64 in Germany and several more in Austria and Switzerland) here in the UK? Why not? It will need reform of English local government — which must happen soon as what we have now doesn't work — and creation of the 'mobility company' with dedicated income streams referred to in my November Inside Track.

Bye bye to bus lane!

FIERY Rushmoor councillor Patricia Hodge is celebrating victory in her Farnborough bus lane battle.

After a year-long fight, she has finally persuaded Hampshire County Council to scrap the stretch of southbound lane which runs from Bradfords roundabout to the Ship Lane junction.

Coun Hodge, who gained backing for her campaign from Rushmoor Council within five months of being elected, said yesterday (Wednesday): "I'm delighted the county council has agreed to act.

"From the outset I thought it was screamingly obvious that this particular stretch was dangerous."

Vehicles pull out of Ship Lane across the bus lane to turn left on to the A325, and the problem is compounded by motorists driving in and out of the nearby BP garage.

Coun Hodge, ***pictured above in the southbound lane***, is an outspoken critic of the bus lanes and would like to seem them scrapped altogether.

She said: "All they do is cause frustration for motorists who find themselves in long queues trying to get in and out of the town."

Her campaign was backed by fellow Tory councillor David Clifford who said the victory vindicated their criticism of the bus lane.

He said: "I applaud the county council for at last agreeing that it made a mistake."

The bus lanes were constructed three years ago and formed part of a £3.3million road scheme between Bradfords roundabout and Boundary Road.

Although not designed to reduce accidents, the county council claims the scheme has seen personal injury accidents drop from 48 to 28 over a 26-month period.

Letters of dissent

Now, having warned Mr Editor — when he (finally) persuaded me to write this column in tandem with the urbane BC — that it might provoke disagreeing views in the letters pages, I am at last seeing some result. Roger Sexton nails his well-known colours to the mast (You Write last month) but he wrongly accuses me of wanting to retain deregulation.

What I want is a very different set of controls placed with the right people. Definitely not a return to the regulation that existed pre-1986. BC is right to say that the better operators have achieved things that would simply not have been possible in the *ancien regime* but there are equally lots of bad (even some appalling) examples of what lack of quality control can do.

I will return to the issue of a halfway house between John Hibbs's totally free contestable market and Roger Sexton's *déja vû* next month. Meanwhile, I leave you with the bizarre news that on 15 November the FPB (Forum of Private Business — no, I'd never heard of it either) called for a nationwide parking charge suspension for the duration of the Christmas/New Year sales period. It argued that this would be 'a Christmas present for independent retailers, aimed at giving shoppers an incentive to spend at town centre stores rather than retail parks and supermarkets where parking is free'.

'Exorbitantly high parking charges in city and town centres are forcing a mass exodus of shoppers to out-of-town malls where parking is free and shoppers actually feel welcome,' says an FPB spokesman. Splendid idea. No wonder we have the highest rate of car use in Europe.

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Whatever happened to...? ...The London bus companies

In an issue where we devote space to Transport for London's plans for the future, I'm looking back 11 rather than the usual one year to find out what happened next.

In January 1995 *Buses*, my predecessor Stephen Morris reported that the privatisation of the 10 main London Bus subsidiaries was all but complete. London United's management and employees had made a successful £25 million-plus bid for their 464-vehicle company, bringing to £215 million the amount raised from the sale so far. All that was left was South London, which Cowie went on to buy before the end of January.

By the end of the process, Cowie also owned Leaside, Stagecoach got East London and Selkent for reasons my colleague John Aldridge explained in last month's In London column, Go-Ahead bought London Central, MTL bought London Northern (renaming it MTL London) and the management/employee teams at CentreWest (led by one Peter Hendy), Metroline and London General bought their companies.

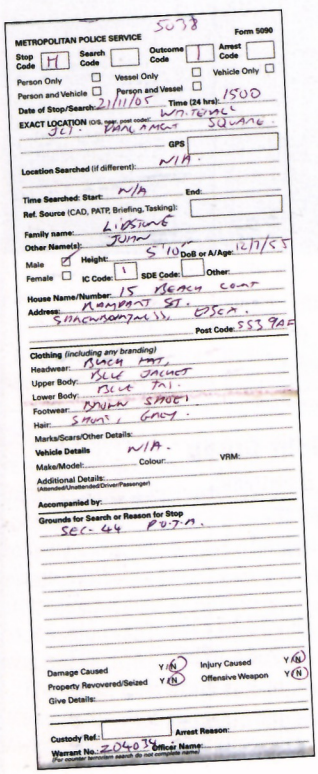
During 1995, MTL London took over London Suburban and R&I Buses, London United bought Westlink (a small London Buses subsidiary sold ahead of the main privatisation), Metroline acquired Brents of Watford and CentreWest grew out of territory by winning contracts in Orpington. The following year saw CentreWest expand west by acquiring London Buslines and The Bee Line from Q Drive, while the first big consolidation move occurred when Go-Ahead bought London General.

Bigger changes followed in 1997 with First buying CentreWest, French group Transdev acquiring London United and Metroline was floated on the stock market. Stagecoach bought Docklands Transit and Cowie renamed itself Arriva, changing Leaside and South London respectively to Arriva London North and Arriva London South. The following year saw Metroline buy MTL London and First acquire Capital Citybus, while Go-Ahead bought Metrobus in 1999. Today's pattern of ownership was finally in place early in 2000 when DelGro (now ComfortDelGro) bought Metroline.

Right: When it was privatised London United ran the Heathrow-London Airbus service, using coach-seated MCW Metrobuses like M727 (A727 THV).

JOHN GOES GREAT GUNS FOR ROUTEMASTERS...

My colleague John Lidstone discovered the reality of post-7 July London security the other week while seeking out the last Routemasters on route 159. While waiting for one to appear in Whitehall, he was confronted by three anti-terrorist marksmen with machine guns trained on him.


METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE Form 5090
Stop Code: H Search Code: Outcome Code: Arrest Code:
Person Only ☐ Vessel Only ☐ Vehicle Only ☐
Person and Vehicle ☐ Person and Vessel ☐
Date of Stop/Search: 21/11/05 Time (24 hrs): 1500
EXACT LOCATION (GIS, nearest, post code): JCT. PARLIAMENT SQUARE
GPS
Location Searched (if different): N/A.
Time Searched: Start: N/A End:
Ref. Source (CAD, PATP, Briefing, Tasking):
Family name: LIDSTONE
Other Name(s): JOHN
Male ☑ Height: 5'10 DoB or A/Age: 12/7/55
Female ☐ IC Code: 1 SDE Code: Other:
House Name/Number: 15 BEACH COURT
Address: MAMPANT RD. EDGH. STANCHESTON
Post Code: SS3 9AF
Clothing (including any branding)
Headwear: BLACK HAT.
Upper Body: BLK JACKET
Lower Body: BLK TAI.
Footwear: BROWN SHOES
Hair: SHORT GREY.
Marks/Scars/Other Details:
Vehicle Details N/A.
Make/Model: Colour: VRM:
Additional Details: (Attended/Unattended/Driver/Passenger)
Accompanied by:
Grounds for Search or Reason for Stop
SEC. 44 PVTA.
Damage Caused Y/N Injury Caused Y/N
Property Recovered/Seized Y/N Offensive Weapon Y/N
Give Details:
Custody Ref.: Arrest Reason:
Warrant No.: Officer Name:
(For counter terrorism search do not complete name)

Springing out of a minivan, they surrounded him and asked 'Do . . . you . . . speak . . .English' in that unmistakably slow, How-to-Address-Foreigners-Who-Probably-Don't mode. Swarthy John tells me his summer suntan hasn't quite faded (it's tropical these days in Shoeburyness), but fortunately he succeeded in summoning a convincing, if weak 'yes'. Otherwise, he fears he might not still be alive and kicking, as the guns were loaded and pointed closely at his chest.

Creditably, these properly polite officers immediately changed their stance once John explained he was merely photographing 159s. Surreally, while filling out a Stops and Searches form 5090, detailing he'd been stopped under Terrorism Section 44, they then lamented the passing of the Routemaster, exchanged pleasantries with every courtesy, before going on their way with cheery smiles all round.

John — who once had a less polite encounter with some aggressive detectives while gricing in, of all places, Saltcoats — thinks his mistake may have been to don a black Bronx hat to cover his ears after a few hours' photography. In retrospect, he says it probably made him look like a baddie.

...WHILE BIDS COME IN FOR ANOTHER

The Routemaster retirement is turning at times into an exercise of 1,001 Uses for a Dead R2RH, with many being bought by people with clever ideas of how to eke more life out of these much revered veterans.

Arriva, which retired another batch in October after the 38 went over to the 18m single-deckers that Tory MP Boris Johnson likes to call German Sausage Buses, has turned one into a charitable venture. As part of the group's support for the BBC's Children in Need appeal, it put RML2494 — shown here with celebrity conductor Eamonn Holmes and members of the band Girls Aloud — into the charity's Great Big Bid auction, raising in excess of £12,500 as bidders vied to acquire it for themselves.

Post haste from abroad

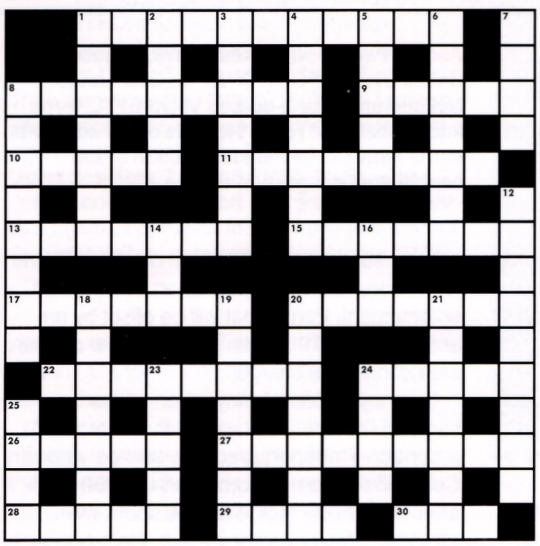
Guy Halford-MacLeod has had another rummage through his stamp collection (November 'Tales') to find a few more examples showing buses around the globe.

His favourite is the 8Ana 1937 Indian issue showing an engraving of what it describes as a 'mail lorry', but which most of us would consider most definitely is a bus. A Bedford WTB postbus, indeed, and one with a letterbox behind the rear wheel.

I was rather taken with the 1965 Cuban stamp showing an 'Omnibus Leyland (Inglaterra)', a Leyland/MCW Olympic no less. Political historians might also recognise that these were the buses supplied early in the Castro years when our American allies frowned upon trading with Cuba. The Malawi Leyland, which Guy feels sure was operated by United Transport Overseas (which sold this particular operation to Stagecoach in 1989), is probably a Victory.

Try your hand at our Xmas X-word

Tom Johnson, who besides having a keen interest in matters bus, compiles crosswords in his spare time. He has prepared this one especially for *Buses* readers to solve sometime between *It's a Wonderful Life* and the *Little Britain* Christmas special over the festive season. I'll publish his answers in next month's 'Tales'. Be warned that clues 10 and 26 across, 2 and 24 down are more cryptic than the others. Enjoy!



ACROSS

1) Morley independent taken over by First West Yorkshire on 31 July 2005 (5, 6)
8) Company famed for its Queen Mary double deckers (9)
9) Outer terminus of Harrogate & District route 36 from Leeds via Harrogate, which uses Volvo/Wright 'twin-deck coaches' (5)
10) Ian Rankin's detective appearing in future *Buses* editions (5)
11) Yorkshire town where the local network is The Zone (8)
13) Precedes National, Counties or Coach Works (7)
15) Surname of independent once based in Rosehearty (7)
17 and 24) Independent based in King's Lynn (7, 5)
20) Independent based in Bourne (7)
22) Blazefield's recently revamped X43/X44 Nelson-Manchester service (8)
24) See 17
26) Prize for a Dalesman chassis builder (5)
27) Leyland or Volvo double-decker for 2012 London sportsmen (9)
28) Derbyshire-based BET company (5)
29) . . . Brothers & Lockyer of Kegworth bodied about 50 S13s for Midland Red and rebodied ex-London Guys for Edinburgh (4)
30) Bus manufacturer whose chairman is Wim van der Leegte (3)

DOWN

1) Bolton company taken over by Arriva on 31 July 2005 (4, 3)
2) Remains of Panoramas he serviced (5)
3) Location of Vaggs' premises, . . . Heath (7)
4) Bus company based at Wellwood, Dunfermline (7)
5) The 'N' of NWRCC (5)
6) Brand name of Oxford Bus Company's quality coach service to London (7)
7) Leyland single-decker suggesting the Road Car county in short (4)
8) Kington-based independent (8)
12) Location of Farraline Park bus station (9)
14) MCV's new low-floor minibus (3)
16) Registration letters of London Transport RF126 to 358 (3)
18) LT depot with code RG (7)
19) . . . Motor Bus is the principal operator in the New Territories (7)
20) Unlike fans of the Routemaster on its final day in service (3-4)
21) Location of Lough Swilly and Kavanagh's (7)
23) Wright body for a young army lad (5)
24) Stare at some of what's coming — a Pennine! (4)
25) Best-selling single-decker at a Devon river (4)

SUPERFLUOUS COMMA OF THE MONTH

CORGI

Charles Roberts of Upton, Wirral wins this month's Corgi 1/76th-scale diecast model for pandering to my pedantic prejudices by sending me this picture of one of the greater punctuation atrocities visited upon a notice relating to buses.

He found it outside the new Warrington bus interchange where, as he says, it seems that literacy isn't a prerequisite for sign making. Perhaps they were too busy coming up with a fancy new name for what you or I would call a bus *station* to have time to tell the difference between possessives and plurals. Or to ask themselves the obvious question: 'A bus's only . . . what?'

Keep your eyes open and camera at the ready for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the **new address**. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

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Where next for London's route master?

An extra 500million new passengers have taken to London's buses over each of the past five years. As he prepares for further growth and a new generation of ultra low-emission accessible buses, Peter Hendy — the man who dared replace Routemasters and introduce Continental bendibuses — tells ALAN MILLAR some of his future plans

Above: Packed with passengers, London United VLE43 (PO54 OOE), an East Lancs Myllennium Vyking-bodied Volvo B7TL, turns into Millbank on route 148, one of the additions to the network for the introduction of the central area congestion charge. MARK LYONS

Having helped create a huge resurgence in bus travel in London over the past five years — more passengers than at any time since 1965 — Peter Hendy could be excused if he put his feet up. But from his office practically in the sky above Westminster, Transport for London's surface transport managing director — among those tipped to succeed Bob Kiley as Mayor Ken Livingstone's transport commissioner — is mapping out a future in which a new generation of ultra low-emission, low-floor buses carries even more passengers.

Against a national trend of decline, today's London bus network carries 38% more passengers — up to 1.79million in 2004/05 — than when TfL was created in 2000 and at 450 million bus/km is 27% more extensive. Compared with 10 years ago, ridership is up 54%, the network by 32% and the London population by 8% to 7.43million. Population growth will continue, with another 70,000 new Londoners (equivalent of the total populace of Barnsley or Lincoln) arriving every year.

Besides the growth in volume, one of TfL's most remarkable achievements has been to use quality incentive contracts to improve reliability. At 97.7%, the proportion of scheduled kilometres operated is the highest since 1996/97. TfL statistics show high frequency routes running no more than 1.1min behind schedule and that reliability of low frequency routes is the best since records began. By specifying large numbers of new vehicles, it has almost halved the age of the fleet to 4.7 years. And inflation busting wage increases and training programmes have improved the morale and effectiveness of the 22,000 people who drive, control and maintain buses each day.

This has come at a financial price. TfL expects to spend £453.9 million this fiscal year on supporting the bus operations, another £7.8 million on infrastructure, £37.8 million on support services, £38.1 million on ticketing and technology and £77.9 million on policing and enforcement. Part of that will be offset by an anticipated £96.9 million profit from the central area congestion charge.

It annoys Peter Hendy when critics suggest the service is worse than before. As a London Transport graduate trainee who ran CentreWest from its formation in 1989 until after FirstGroup took over, he spent the 1990s in offices in Paddington. He says he couldn't depend on buses to take him to meetings at London Buses' headquarters in Victoria. 'Unless a bus was in view, I would take a taxi because the 36 then was serially unreliable.' Today, he is confident that he could rely on the equivalent buses. 'That is a step change from the so-called good old days,' he argues. 'They weren't good old days. They were b****y crap.' Sensitive readers note that the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines his robust 'c' word as 'nonsense' or 'rubbish'.

He doesn't pretend that today's services are perfect, but lost mileage statistics show that only four of TfL's 18 operators fell short of its 99% operated mileage target in the four weeks to 16 September. Even the worst of these — Centra, which has just lost a contract and has been on a deteriorating trend — achieved 97.87%. The other three, incidentally, were Docklands Bus, F.E. Thorpe

Left: Peter Hendy launching the heritage Routemasters on 14 November. JOHN G. LIDSTONE

Above: **Arriva London Mercedes-Benz Citaro bendibus MA124 (BX55 FWH) prepares to turn from Lower Regent Street into Piccadilly shortly after taking over from Routemasters on the 38. The corridor management plans for this route could see these buses being able to cross Piccadilly Circus direct from Shaftesbury Avenue rather than execute the lengthy four-sided deviation that they do today.** SWANSWELL

Right: **One of many signs of recent rapid change in London was the end of step-entrance minibus operation — on route H21 (Bedfont Green-Sunbury) — after 2 December. They were operated latterly by Travel London, which took over Tellings-Golden Miller's bus operations — including Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D 56 (P456 MLE) — in June. London Transport first granted consent to a minibus operator in May 1960 and started its own minibus services in September 1972.** PHILIP WALLIS

and TfL-owned East Thames Buses, which doesn't bid for routes and is allocated them rather than being awarded contracts.

Some of the most dramatic ridership and mileage increases followed the introduction of the congestion charge in February 2003, and the westward extension due in 2007 should generate more. It is hardly surprising, however, that TfL anticipates less spectacular change over the next five, Even so, it anticipates another 7.1% rise in passenger numbers to 1.92million, with a 4.9% increase in bus/km. It needs to cater for that demand and the likelihood that passengers' expectations will continue rising as measures like the quality incentive contracts deliver greater reliability.

Olympics, beyond and corridor management proposals

Beyond that, the 2012 Olympic Games will require more buses. Given the longer lead times involved, his railway colleagues are already making detailed plans for infrastructure improvements for those few summer weeks. However, buses and coaches will move huge numbers of people to, from and within the Olympic site. Peter Hendy admires what FirstGroup, Stagecoach and Greater Manchester PTE achieved when the 2002 Commonwealth Games were held in Manchester.

Expect elements of that — on a larger scale — in east London in 2012, but also expect TfL to minimise the need for extra vehicles. The site will be designed to maximise the number of visitors walking or cycling over shorter distances. 'We can't have the bus and coach operating industry running out of capacity,' he explains. 'We've got to avoid coach hire prices going through the roof over those weeks.'

TfL is also trying to anticipate the amount of public transport capacity it will require by 2025, when traffic congestion in the outer suburbs could conceivably be far worse than today. Rail services will need to expand, but buses offer the only quick and adaptable fix. 'The truth is that real capacity enhancements on the Underground won't come until between 2009 and 2012. Crossrail has not been funded and the government has deferred a decision until the Lyons Report on local government finance in 2007,' he says. The West London Transit tramway along the Uxbridge Road — he acknowledges it is 'not universally popular with all the people in the areas through which it passes' — is unlikely to be built before 2011.

Bus schemes are not just about adding hundreds of additional vehicles into existing road networks. One of the most exciting projects on Peter Hendy's current agenda is corridor management. As with existing bus priority schemes, the idea is to use additional bus lanes and traffic management measures to speed up buses, but the approach is more sophisticated than before.

TfL recognises that bus lanes run into resistance from powerful local traders who argue that their businesses will suffer if customers can no longer pick up their purchases from the kerbside. So these schemes will improve freight, pedestrian and cycle movements as well as bus flows. There will be properly designed loading and unloading bays to keep the shops on side, and more attractive pavements. The term being used is 'public realm'.

The first are envisaged over two north London routes served by high-capacity Mercedes-Benz Citaro bendibuses — the 38 (Victoria-Hackney) and 149 (London Bridge-Edmonton). Bus lane provision on the 38 would

Metroline was due to convert route 4 (Archway-Waterloo) to low-floor operation on 10 December, the day after route 159 lost the last full service Routemasters, thus removing step-entrance buses from central London. Among the buses being replaced was Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian AV12 (P492 MBY), seen on Waterloo Bridge. PHILIP WALLIS

Left: If Peter Hendy realises his plans for another new generation of London buses, then many more mid-life vehicles will be cascaded to other parts of the country. This is First London LDN34329 (H129 FLX), a Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympian, still wearing its old identity for its new life with First Devon & Cornwall in Penzance. STEVE RICE

double to 40%. He says the 38 has been selected partly because it runs almost wholly over roads managed by boroughs rather than TfL. And we're talking of four boroughs — Westminster, Camden, Islington and Hackney — controlled by three different political parties. If they all buy into the concept, he believes it will be easier to roll out similar capacity enhancements across London.

Around Piccadilly Circus, TfL plans a two-way bus lane in Piccadilly and southbound buses running direct from Shaftesbury Avenue to Piccadilly rather than today's lengthy round-the-blocks diversion. That alone would cut 3 to 4min from the journey and Peter Hendy believes that, over the whole 38 route, between 10 and 20% additional capacity could be provided with the same number of buses.

'I think we've got a reasonable chance of putting a lot of this in during the early part of 2007,' he says, 'but we can't rush it because we've got to consult with people.' He is encouraged that traders on Essex Road, Islington are apparently keen that the scheme should go ahead.

The next generation of buses

Even though London has by far the biggest concentration of modern buses in the UK, Peter Hendy wants to go on driving the UK's bus replacement programmes — a process that would continue the big groups' process of refreshing their regional fleets with seven-year-old London cast-offs. However, he says it is hard to justify new vehicles on re-let contracts unless the new vehicles are perceptibly higher specified than those running today. If they aren't, then London buses would yet again be kept for 12 or 14 years.

By the end of 2005, half of the buses on TfL routes will have engines to Euro2 emission standards, the other half to Euro3 or (in the case of a handful) Euro4. All will have wheelchair ramps and low floors, while the newest have plug-type exit doors, improved heating and ventilation, and engine bay fire suppression.

The next priorities are to lower emissions much farther, to perfect ventilation in hot weather and aim for a completely flat low floor. Emission reduction will be tackled in three ways. One by reducing NOx emissions on existing vehicles. Another by making a step change in diesel emissions and the third by persisting with hydrogen fuel cell technology.

After two years, the trial with three fuel cell Citaros on the First-operated RV1 tourist service is being extended for a third. 'We're very pleased with the fuel-cell buses, which have been remarkably robust, but it will be a number of years before that technology is commercially viable,' he says. 'We are keen to proceed with the hydrogen economy, and we will do this with other important European cities.

'If the Mayor was here, he would say he is disappointed that we have not moved faster with hydrogen, but this is because we're in the hands of world motor manufacturers.' Until that technology is available, TfL will push for diesel-electric hybrid buses, which it thinks are a far better bet than any sort of gas engines. 'Our view of hybrid is that it's just about to become mainstream technology,' he says. 'Various manufacturers are already there. Only they won't tell each other what they're doing.'

The first six hybrids — Wright Electrocity midibuses for London Central — are due imminently on route 360 (Kensington-Elephant & Castle), where they will operate alongside conventional diesel Darts. The original plan — scuppered by the TransBus collapse in 2004 — was for 12 hybrid Enviro200s on the route. 'The idea of the 360 is to get a route's worth of vehicles and run them normally,' says Peter Hendy, 'and not just have a clockwork bus that comes out on special occasions.'

Hybrid midibuses may be technically exciting, but the real prize is an electric double-decker. 'It doesn't make any sense for the most environmentally friendly vehicles to be only one

fifth of the fleet,' he says. 'The majority of the fleet is likely to remain double-deck and we're looking urgently for double-deck hybrids.' He is confident that manufacturers will come up with a viable prototype before long. After all, he points out, they have produced practical solutions to most other allegedly impossible demands that have come out of London over the past 15 years. 'If they can put men on the Moon, we can get there,' he says.

That same confidence convinces him that, sooner or later, TfL will achieve its dream of having 100% low-floor/flat floor buses. The high lower deck seating capacity of the Alexander Dennis Enviro400 is the best so far in combating what he describes as 'the most unholy part of the compromise with accessible buses' — that able-bodied or moderately ambulant passengers lose accessible seats to accommodate wheelchairs.

He says TfL has still to determine which of the top deck cooling systems on trial will become standard, but is sure it will find a satisfactory solution short of full air conditioning. Having helped FirstGroup set up New World First Bus in Hong Kong, he says air-conditioned double-deckers are impractical, as the extra weight would require a third axle.

Here again, he says TfL is setting the pace. 'No one else in the industry has lifted a finger on this issue,' he argues. In the meantime, bus roofs are being painted white to deflect heat and contract renewals using existing vehicles specify their refurbishment with the maximum number of opening windows.

Bendibuses and Routemasters

Just in case you missed it a few paragraphs back, yes, Peter Hendy — the man whose articulated single-deckers are known to some as 'Hendy's bendies' — does say that most of the fleet will likely remain double-deck. When Citaro bendies replace low-floor double-deckers on route 29 in January, bendibuses will provide 12 of the capital's busiest routes.

TfL's concurrent decision to phase out all but a handful of Routemasters has generated some extraordinarily personal criticism from elements of the pro-Routemaster lobby, which is ironic given that Peter Hendy is himself an enthusiast (with an admirably low membership number in the London Omnibus Traction Society). And that he has helped ensure that a small fleet of heritage RMs will continue to ply two routes in the City and West End for the foreseeable future.

He makes no apology for the Routemasters' demise or for specifying bendibuses, and on this issue sees himself as a collateral target for the Mayor's political enemies. He also argues that British Rail would have received the same sort of attack had it phased out steam trains today rather than 30 years ago when the national mood was more inclined to look forward than cling to its past.

One of many myths surrounding the Routemasters' withdrawal is that they were all replaced by bendies. That only happened with three-and-a-half routes (the half is the 436, which replaced part of the 36); bendies replaced rear-engined double-deckers on the other eight, and low-floor double-deckers have replaced most RMs.

Above: Stagecoach-operated heritage Routemaster RM2089 (ALM 89B) passing the Mansion House on 20 November, the first Sunday of the tourist shuttle services on routes 15 and 9. GEOFF RIXON

In Peter Hendy's view, bendibuses are simply unguided trams with rubber tyres — very high capacity vehicles for trunk routes on which huge volumes of passengers are carried at the busiest times. Will there be any more? 'It depends on whether and how demand increases,' he says. 'The truth is that we've got some routes that are so busy that we need a bus that holds 140 passengers. If we could get a double-decker with that capacity, we would use it.'

He rejects claims that regular passengers dislike them. 'For the 38 and 73, we are carrying huge numbers of people on long journeys. People from Stoke Newington get seats on them and people in Essex Road get seats when the Stoke Newington people get off at the Angel. They are a tool, just as minibuses were in providing more frequency in times of lower demand.' Besides any other questions of the age of the vehicles or passengers' safety, he says Routemasters are too small for the busiest routes.

He is unimpressed by what he sees as politically motivated surveys showing apparent public preference for Routemasters over bendibuses. 'This is real St John's Wood cocktail party stuff,' he says. While a November poll by Policy Exchange claimed that 59% of disabled people ('disabled' included able-bodied people with a disabled relative) think bendies are worse than RMs, he says TfL's surveys show that the most regular bendibus passengers like them most.

However, he is confident that the two heritage Routemaster routes begun in November will become a long-term part of the London scene and that they will be exempt from the Disability Discrimination Act conditions that could put all non-wheelchair accessible buses off the road in 2016.

Commercial advertisers are showing great interest in exploiting the opportunities to sell their wares on the sides of these RMs, and early signs are that tourists and regular bus passengers are using them. But there is an implicit threat that they could vanish if they don't cover their costs. 'I say to enthusiasts that they are costing well over £1 million a year to run,' he says. 'If they only take pictures of them, then they will just be an expensive picture opportunity.'

Phasing out cash fares

Another deciding factor against the Routemaster was the steady reduction in numbers of London bus passengers paying cash fares for single journeys. The extension of free travel from under-11s to under-16s in September has reduced this to under 10%, and has taken out some of the most persistent fare dodgers. The Mayor wants to extend this concession next autumn to 16 and 17-year olds in full-time education.

Without any further action, Peter Hendy says the proportion of cash single fares will eventually fall below 5%. There were plans to eliminate them altogether by extending the central London pay-before-you-board cashless zone across the whole system during 2006, but that has been deferred by another year and might not happen even then. The stumbling block is that as the proportion off cash fares falls, the premium that the passenger pays (single journeys cost £1.50 from January) becomes increasingly high and disadvantages the poorest members of the community.

One thing that is clear is that there is no intention of installing thousands of pavement ticket machines in the suburbs. It makes no financial sense if fewer than 5% of passengers use them and Peter Hendy admits he doesn't like the ones in the central area, even if, at last, they are now more reliable.

TfL's OysterCard smartcard holds the key to extending cashless travel, and TfL's challenge in outer London will be to increase the number of outlets selling them and get them into many more hands than today. A big obstacle is that the national rail operators don't accept OysterCard — a policy that explains why most of the heavily used pavement ticket machines are outside Victoria and other main line stations. 'Railway passengers are a class of semi-regular or regular bus users who haven't got that facility on their tickets,' he says.

Sooner or later, he believes that cash fares will fall so low that TfL will need to grasp the nettle and go cashless. Recent history, he says, gives him confidence that it will work. 'Ten years ago, no one would think we would get to the point where 91% of bus passengers pay before they board.'

DGC Buses: A child of its time

Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220 KUI 9265 in Creetown, off the A75 near Newton Stewart. This 42-seater was previously with K-Line of Honley and is the pride and joy of regular driver Rab Ross, whose name appears under the windscreen. COLIN DOUGLAS

Dumfries & Galloway Council has one of the few council-owned bus fleets that is neither an arms' length company nor exclusively a schoolbus fleet. ALAN MILLAR explains more

There is a dwindling band of council-owned bus companies — soon to be 16 when Bournemouth Council sells Yellow Buses — and there are council-owned schoolbus fleets. But DGC Buses is a rare combination of the two, a directly owned council bus undertaking that runs public bus services as well as schoolbuses.

This division of Dumfries & Galloway Council operates 39 small and full-size single-deckers across a large area of rural south-west Scotland. Not being a traditional corporation bus operation, it wasn't turned into an arms' length limited company 20 years ago and, for now, it functions without the formality of even having an operator licence.

It's a product of the geography and history of the area. Dumfries & Galloway is the opposite of what the industry likes to call good bus territory. These former counties of Dumfries, Kirkcudbright (*pronounced Curr-coo-bree*) and Wigtownshire cover 2,470sq miles, which is slightly smaller than Lincolnshire, but is home to only 147,000 people — around the population of Blackpool. A quarter of them (37,000) are domiciled in or around Dumfries. The next biggest urban centres are 75 miles west in Stranraer (11,000) and 15 miles east in Annan (9,000), with a further 10 settlements of between 2,000 and 4,000 residents. A quarter of the inhabitants (mostly in the poorer urban areas) have no access to a car and a further 35% lack daytime access to one.

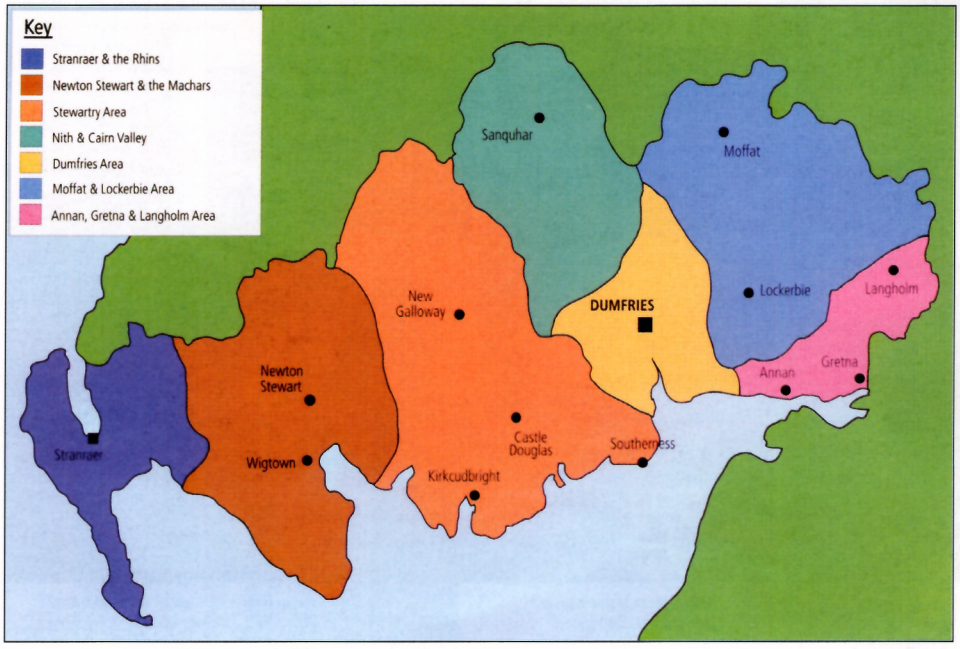
This was one of the first places where a state-owned operator — in this case Western SMT — demanded local authority subsidies for rural services in the early 1970s, and today the council supports 85% of the network — including the flagship Dumfries-Stranraer route. It spends £3.2 million a year on supported services, £2.6 million on schoolbuses and endeavours where possible to combine the two requirements.

There are only six commercial services within the region, all radiating from Dumfries, all operated by Stagecoach. These are the interurban routes to Carlisle, Lockerbie and Moffat and the three busiest town services to Locharbriggs, Lincluden and Lochside. Stagecoach Western (successor to Western SMT) runs five of them, Stagecoach North West the Carlisle route.

Such a thinly populated area is awash with neither many independent bus operators nor qualified bus drivers. While there is reasonable interest among the independents in bidding for school contracts, the disciplines of operating local public services discourage many of them from becoming

Left: Oldest bus in the fleet is Leyland National JHW 103P, which DGC acquired from Trent in 2001 along with two Optare Delta-bodied DAFs.

Right: Dumfries & Galloway stretches for around 100 miles from Stranraer to east of Langholm.



involved in that end of the market. Currently, 12 provide services, some of them single journeys one day a week.

The nucleus of DGC Buses predates the streamlining of Scottish local government 30 years ago. The county councils of Wigtownshire and the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright owned schoolbuses — we published a picture of one of the Kirkcudbright vehicles, a locally-bodied Austin, in June 1970 *Buses* — and the operation continued in Dumfries & Galloway Regional Council ownership. These were yellow schoolbuses long before American, French and Turkish imports made them fashionable.

Fulfilling a wider role

This fleet began to fulfill a wider role after the Scottish Bus Group embarked on its Scotmap route revisions and matched Western's services more closely to passenger demand in 1984/85. Some of the schoolbuses were licensed under Section 46 of the 1981 Public Passenger Vehicles Act to fill gaps in the network at a marginal cost, with fares income and fuel duty rebate passing to the council to assist with overall running costs.

It wasn't until August 2001 — over five years after the current single-tier local authority was created — that the DGC Buses identity was launched and the council became more heavily involved in mainstream bus services. The catalyst was Stagecoach, which had bought Western Buses seven years earlier and whose local management was exploiting its dominance of the tendered bus market by hiking up prices as contracts came up for renewal. Prices for four routes in The Machars south of Newton Stewart were around £30,000 and Colin Douglas, the council's service manager, transportation and road safety, says it concluded that it could do the job more cost effectively by itself.

'We went out and bought some big buses — two Optare Delta-bodied DAFs and a Leyland National from Trent,' he says. 'We saw it as a jolt to Stagecoach. We have a much better working relationship with Stagecoach today and we don't need our own buses now for any anti-competitive reasons, but they do show that we will do it ourselves if we cannot get it done at the right price.'

While it made no bones about clipping Stagecoach's wings, the council went out of its way not to alienate its small band of independent operator contractors. DGC Buses joined the Dumfries & Galloway Bus & Coach Association, which meets monthly, to show that it was not trying to take away their business. 'We took time to allay their suspicions about what we were doing and to explain that we wanted to try and make sure that everyone has work to share.'

Children didn't like the stigma

This coincided with the change of identity. The council undertakes regular best value reviews and it might interest today's converts to yellow schoolbuses to know that the children of Dumfries & Galloway told the council that they didn't want to be stigmatised by riding in all-yellow buses. It kept yellow fronts and rears as a road safety measure, but relieved them with large areas of bright red.

Why red? 'I believe if a bus hasn't got red in it, it's not a real bus,' says Colin Douglas. His office walls are decorated with pictures and newspaper cuttings of red London Routemasters and madder Edinburgh Orions and just in case you've not guessed already, this senior council officer also is a bus enthusiast. Another personal passion is Heart of Midlothian Football Club and I suspect he isn't joking when he says he might change the DGC red to claret if Hearts wins the Scottish Premier League this season.

Public bus operation has changed the fleet, replacing noisy truck-derived centre-entrance schoolbuses bought new with a variety of secondhand local service buses. These range from Mercedes-Benz Varios and 811Ds from the likes of Arriva Midlands, Dublin Bus and Stagecoach Manchester to DAF SB220s and Dennis Darts with Wright Handybus bodies. The latest pair of Darts, from Ulsterbus, joins two new to Go North East; they replace 12-year-old Renault Midliners. The five ex-Dublin 811Ds, with Donegal-built Euro Coach bodies,

Below: P103 HCH is one of four ex-Arriva Midlands Alexander ALX100-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios acquired in 2003 when they were seven years old. Here, it arrives in Dumfries on the 555 Ring'n'Ride from Castle Douglas, with a Stagecoach Optare Solo close behind.

Left: A regular passenger catches the once weekly one-way shoppers' service from Ae Village to Dumfries. H716 HSX is one of five former Dublin Bus Mercedes-Benz 811Ds with Euro Coach bodies. It was ME45 (95 D 33045) in its former life.

have been converted from automatic to manual transmission better suited to the higher speeds required between towns.

Colin Douglas's enthusiasm helps explain two of the spare buses — the now 30-year old Leyland National and a slightly newer Leyland Leopard with Alexander Y-type body that served with Stagecoach Western at Stranraer until a few months ago. He thinks the National — new to Bristol Omnibus Company and one of few left anywhere with an original specification Leyland 510 engine — might be the only one remaining in municipal ownership. The Leopard requires major chassis surgery before it enters service.

He is negotiating with Stagecoach to acquire DGC Buses' first low-floor vehicle, which he hopes will be an ex-ABC Buses Optare Solo in the group's new Merseyside operation. Besides providing better accessibility on a Ring'n'Ride shoppers' service between Castle Douglas and Dumfries, this would also have some emotional appeal as David Garnett, who founded ABC, later set up White Star of Lockerbie, which ran the Ring'n'Ride contract before selling out to Stagecoach.

DGC Buses currently operates 14 public routes, but although all buses used on them carry comprehensive destination blinds for all services, this remains primarily a schoolbus fleet. 'Every bus is there to do a school run,' says Colin Douglas. 'No vehicles are exclusively for local bus services.' The only all-day route is the hourly Langholm town service at the eastern extremity of the region, which the council has operated directly since deregulation in 1986.

Others include fill-in journeys between school runs, some plugging very specific gaps in the network. Typical of these is a Friday morning one-way journey from Ae Village — a forestry community south of Moffat — into Dumfries. Passengers using it return on the commercial Stagecoach service previously operated by Gibson's of Moffat, while the ex-Dublin Mercedes used on it goes on to carry children on one of the council's baths contracts. All vehicles have seatbelts, and CD players are fitted to reward well-behaved children by playing music. Passengers using the Ring'n'Ride routes must book 24hr in advance to arrange door-to-door pick-ups from the villages around Castle Douglas, although that service also picks up from bus stops en route. It has built up a base of 90 regular names, many in communities where the only services were school journeys and Postbuses.

In its original form, it connected at Castle Douglas with the trunk service to Dumfries, but passenger pressure led to its extension into Dumfries, where it runs via edge-of-town supermarkets. This service operates like the archetypal country bus, with the regular driver more than likely going off and knocking on doors if a regular passenger doesn't turn up when expected.

Drivers have their own regular buses

Wherever possible, each driver is allocated his or her own bus, an arrangement that encourages drivers to take pride in their vehicles and, for the most part, saves the council from having to hire cleaning staff. Rab Ross, regular driver of the solitary Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220 in the fleet, equips it with a selection of mops, a bucket and air fresheners. Indeed, when DGC Buses first acquired it, Rab and his wife spent the weekend valeting the Ikarus before it entered service.

Given the shortage of potential part-time drivers, the operation has to provide sufficient working hours to attract the staff it needs. Some drivers also are part-time school janitors, while eight others also are couriers, driving the council's internal mail vans. When a second driver was needed in Langholm, part of the justification for doing so was to add extra journeys on the route to Eskdalemuir.

These more flexible arrangements mean that the council sometimes finds it easier to use its own buses to try out new ideas for services. And such is the relationship with other operators that reciprocal arrangements exist for council drivers to help out the independents or vice versa.

Flexibility best describes the ticketing arrangements. Rab Ross's DAF has a manual Almex machine and there are a few other machines — including a Setright — on the busier routes, but passengers elsewhere are issued with handwritten receipts. That is about to change, though, as the Scottish Executive's nationwide smartcard system (Scottish Column last month) will see every bus in the country equipped with a state-of-the-art electronic ticket machine. Dumfries & Galloway has yet to decide which system to adopt for its own fleet and for its smaller operator contractors.

All change from 2006

DGC Buses faces further change with the major restructure of highways and public transport in April when the new Transport Scotland agency starts operating from the former British Rail Scottish Region offices in Glasgow. Dumfries & Galloway becomes one of the seven regional transport partnerships (RTPs) being established to work with the new agency and a likely early change will be a requirement that the bus operation has an operator licence.

Its longer term future depends on the availability of sufficient funding as the Scottish Executive on one hand wants to contain council tax bills by reducing expenditure while it also expects the RTPs to increase mobility and social inclusion. Little has changed in the 35 years since Western SMT first sought funds for rural routes in the area.

Colin Douglas hopes to contain the effect in 2006/07 by converting some schools services — some run by Stagecoach and independents, others by DGC Buses — to higher capacity vehicles. Councillors will be offered the option of using double-deckers, but he expects they will prefer high-capacity single-deckers like 70-seat Dennis Javelins in view of the distances involved on many of the services and the need to have a second escort to maintain discipline on double-deckers. These might replace DGC Buses' DAFs.

However, the council — in which a 'rainbow coalition' of Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party, Conservatives and independents holds power against a Labour opposition — may still face bigger public transport cuts the following year.

It might also take advantage of a Scottish Executive 'spend to save' initiative to obtain its first brand new buses. Until now, DGC Buses has bought good secondhand 'proper' buses to replace most of its truck-derived schoolbuses. But the Byzantine ways of local government finance suggest that it could use its capital budget to buy new vehicles and reduce the amount of its revenue budget spent operating and maintaining them.

Apparently, if it spent £100,000 on each of three 70-seat coaches and £80,000 on each of five new 25-seat buses, and bought another five new 25-seaters four years later, it would save money over a longer period. Whether suitable new vehicles could be sourced at such keen prices is a moot point, but it is a sign of the council's determination to continue to operate buses as well as support the vast majority that are supplied by commercial undertakings.

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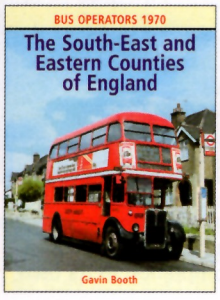

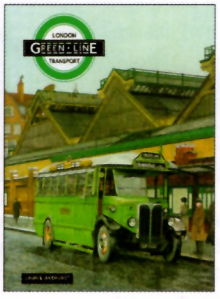

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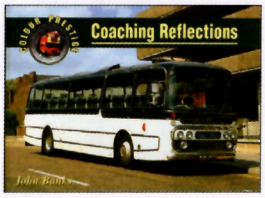

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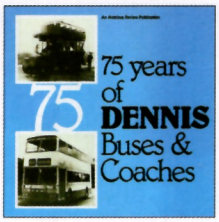

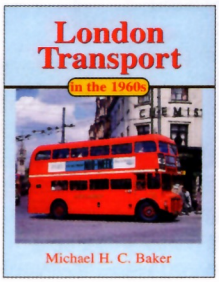

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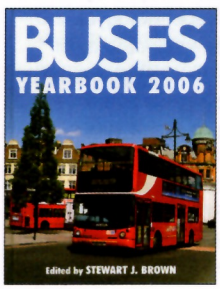

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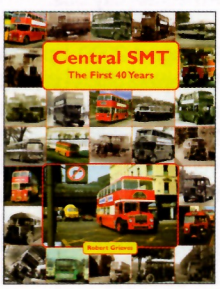

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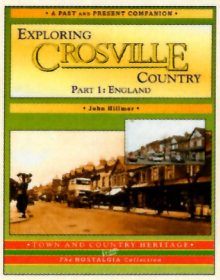

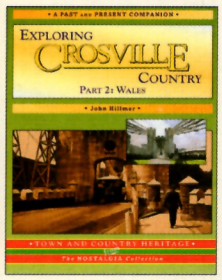

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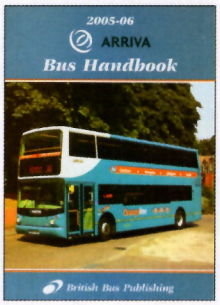

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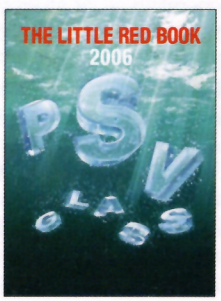

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The own label bus company

The company behind Plaxton's new Primo midibus has global aspirations for this vehicle. As ALAN MILLAR reports, it aims to realise them in a revolutionary way

Within a few years, the 7.8m midibus launched last September as the Plaxton Primo could be found operating as far afield as New Zealand, Hungary, Russia, Greece and Spain. Those buses won't be called Primo, nor will they carry Plaxton badges, for this vehicle represents a new concept in bus manufacturing and marketing.

The company behind the venture is an Anglo-Hungarian business called Enterprise Bus. It calls the Primo the Plasma and it is the bus manufacturing equivalent of companies that make 'own label' products like washing powders or baked beans for supermarkets. It designs and builds the vehicles and hopes to achieve economic volumes by signing up partnerships with companies able to fit out and sell the vehicles in their own markets.

It plans to develop other vehicles for sale by similar arrangements, but has begun on the simple premise that if its key target market is Eastern Europe, then it has to recognise that operators there are reluctant to pay more than euro100,000 (£70,000) for an 8m midibus. It must build large enough volumes to be able to supply those operators at prices they are prepared to pay, but it cannot afford the massive cost of setting up its own sales and service operations to challenge established manufacturers in their local markets. By developing innovative products like the Plasma/Primo, it offers manufacturers like Plaxton a product they don't already make.

Enterprise Bus is a consequence of the 2004 collapse of TransBus International. All five founding directors held senior jobs with TransBus, while its origins date back to 1999 when Henlys — Plaxton's owner — set up a chassis design operation in Budapest. Following Mayflower's acquisition of Alexander and Dennis, Plaxton tried to turn itself into a complete vehicle manufacturer and Hungary — the principal bus production centre for the former Soviet Bloc — possessed some of Europe's most sought-after bus engineering expertise and less expensive skilled labour.

A key figure in all this was Tony Varga, who spent many years with Csepel Autogyar, the company that supplied the vast majority of chassis bodied by Ikarus. Csepel (*pronounced Cheppel*) helped develop the horizontal version of the Cummins L10 engine in the 1980s and at one time had capacity to build up to 12,000 chassis per year. Tony Varga's team developed a vehicle code-named LFCC9 (for Low-Floor City Chassis 1999), which Henlys' Blue Bird subsidiary eventually adopted as its Ultra LF American city bus.

After Mayflower and Henlys formed TransBus in August 2000, operational control of the Budapest office passed to Dennis in Guildford and although it did some useful work for TransBus, including engineering the Euro3 version of the Javelin coach, it lost its primary function. It passed to Alexander Dennis after TransBus went into administration, but didn't fit into a business that was trying to reduce overheads and return to profit.

Above: The left-hand-drive Plasma prototype in the livery of Jaszkun Volán, which has ordered six more for completion in its own workshops.

A new type of manufacturer

Graeme Grieve, TransBus group purchasing director, identified an opportunity to buy the Budapest operation when his employer collapsed, but the administrator wanted to sell TransBus in as few separate pieces as possible. However, within two months of buying the chassis and bus bodying activities, Alexander Dennis sold the Hungarian office on to him on 13 July 2004. Enterprise Bus was born, with a registered office in England and a vision for a new type of bus manufacturing and design company.

Soon, the rest of the management team — all ex-Plaxton and TransBus men — was in place. Sales and marketing director Brian Snead, latterly TransBus group engineering director, began his career in one of the great British motor industry training schools — the Ford Motor Company — working on trucks. He spent 15 years with Nissan, helping develop its

Right: The midibus the Plasma is designed to replace. An Ikarus 405 in the Polish capital city of Warsaw in April 1995.

Right: Part of the 'destruction test' performed on the Plasma/Primo before it went into production.

UK research and development centre at Cranfield, before joining Plaxton.

Jeff Barnett, director of test and development, gained much of his earlier experience with the Ministry of Defence. Director of new product development Terry Gallagher started out with Leyland Bus, the other great industry training school. He also worked with Volvo and in the rail industry. Graeme Grieve's previous career was with British Aerospace and the hotels industry.

All four are based at the UK design office in a small multi-user business park outside the Lancashire village of Mawdesley, where Enterprise Bus has another six employees. Fellow director Tony Varga runs the Budapest office, where the company currently has another seven employees. It also is establishing a factory in a converted print works in Gyar, Budapest.

That facility, close to a motorway intersection, has capacity to build 500 bus chassis and body frames a year, but that will be a gradual process and the target for 2006 is 110 vehicles. Contract employees provide Enterprise Bus with the flexibility that is not possible to achieve from a permanent workforce. The plan is that, if they meet Enterprise Bus's standards, they will become permanent employees and the production line workforce will grow to 15 by the end of 2006.

The founding directors are immensely proud that they all helped hand build the Plasma/Primo prototypes, and indeed that they also moved all their furniture and fittings into a larger unit on the Mawdesley site without calling in professional removers. 'I've got scars and chunks out of my hands from building the buses,' says Brian Snead. 'This is one of the recipes for potential success of the company.'

As a highly focused team unencumbered by big company practices like endless meetings, Enterprise Bus has also got on remarkably quickly with the job of turning a concept into a productionised bus. Most joined in September 2004, yet had their first Plasma ready by the end of April 2005, the vehicle being completed — by the UK design team — within six weeks, or about half the time a larger company might have taken.

Designed to replace an Ikarus

The low-floor Plasma was designed to replace the Ikarus 405, a 7.3m Csepel-chassised step-entrance midibus with a Perkins Phaser engine and Voith Midimat gearbox — a 1980s vehicle with which Tony Varga was closely involved.

Although UK operators buy longer midibuses, 8m is a key length across many European markets. A clever part of the Plasma design is that it accommodates two doors and a decent mix of seating and standing capacity within that length. And while the Ikarus 405 has a conventional T-drive layout with a short wheelbase and long rear overhang, the Z-drive arrangement on the Plasma gives it an incredibly short rear overhang with more usable low-floor space in its longer wheelbase.

Ideally, it would have been 2.3m wide, but that would have left insufficient space for 2+2 seating, so it is 2.4m wide — still narrow enough for the needs of those UK operators who found that the original 2.5m Optare Solo was too wide.

Arguably, the cleverest bit of all is the way that Enterprise Bus has repackaged proven technology into the Plasma. No major component is untried, but the combination of a stainless steel structure, the Z-drive layout and independent front suspension creates a practical, compact and lightweight vehicle unlike anything available from mainstream manufacturers.

The development process was accelerated by adopting the car industry practice of simultaneous engineering — testing parts of the vehicle at the same time as others were being designed — rather than waiting until the complete vehicle was ready. All major components have been tested on rigs to simulate the harshest operating conditions the manufacturer can imagine, with the objective of producing a vehicle with low warranty costs. The body structure is designed to comply with European type approval.

From the outset, the Plasma was conceived in left and right-hand-drive formats. Usually, a bus is designed one way round for its principal market then re-engineered — sometimes quite awkwardly — for the others. On this vehicle, the dashboard binnacle is mounted on the steering column and the driver's door for the right-hand-drive UK version is a reverse mould of the left-hand-drive model.

While Brian Snead acknowledges that, if anything, the Plasma is over-engineered for the job it is expected to do — there is some margin, for instance, in its axle capacity — it will remain a 7.8m bus. Some observers have suggested it would make an attractive longer bus, but that would require larger tyres and brakes and, in any case, the company detects little significant demand in Europe for anything between 8m and 12m long.

First one is in Hungary

While most initial production is for Plaxton, the first Plasma was a left-hand-drive two-door 23-seater that regional operator Jaszkun Volán has been evaluating in the Hungarian city of Szolnok. Plaxton employees helped fit out the vehicle, which is mechanically similar to the 28-seat one-door UK Primo with four-cylinder Cummins ISBe engine and Allison 2000 automatic transmission.

Enterprise Bus also offers a ZF manual gearbox option, primarily for the Hungarian market. But pressure from drivers led Jaszkun Volán to specify automatics in a follow up order for six vehicles, which it will fit out in its own workshops in the same way that Plaxton completes its Primos. The operator has capacity to finish up to 100 bodies a year and Enterprise Bus hopes to supply half of them. The idea is that Jaszkun Volán — which has around 1,000 largely life-expired buses in its own fleet — will sell Plasmas to others of the 24 Volánbusz undertakings, which together run around 6,000 vehicles.

A third partnership is being established with Designline, the New Zealand bodybuilder that supplied many of the vehicles that Stagecoach bought there, and which built the Olymbus hybrids for Stagecoach North East. Plaxton completed a prototype to New Zealand specification — it has a different seating layout and its emergency exit is in the rear window rather than halfway along the offside — and it was shipped out from Hull Docks at the beginning of November. Initial interest in New Zealand and Australia has been encouraging.

Beyond these three relationships, Enterprise Bus is following up approaches from potential partners in Russia, Spain and Greece, but despite having overseen an incredible pace of development in little more than a year, Graeme Grieve insists that the company won't rush into too many new deals. As its No.1 customer, the relationship with Plaxton cannot be compromised. 'Quality is more important than volume,' he says.

Plans for the future

In the longer term — and we're talking maybe three years ahead — Enterprise Bus has concepts for two other vehicles. One would be a midicoach based around the Plasma driveline, a vehicle that could conceivably provide Plaxton with a replacement for its Mercedes-Benz Vario-based Cheetah in the same way as the Primo will replace the Vario-based Beaver. As with the Plasma, this would fill a gap in Eastern Europe left by the demise of an 8m Ikarus coach.

The other would be a low-cost 18m articulated bus designed specifically for Eastern Europe, where operators' reluctance to pay West European prices has left them crying out for an affordable replacement for their thousands of step-entrance Ikarus vehicles. This would probably be built in partnership with a Hungarian partner, but the immediate priority is to generate bigger volumes of Plasma sales and deliver the aspirations of high build quality.

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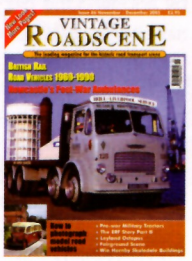

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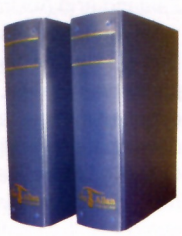

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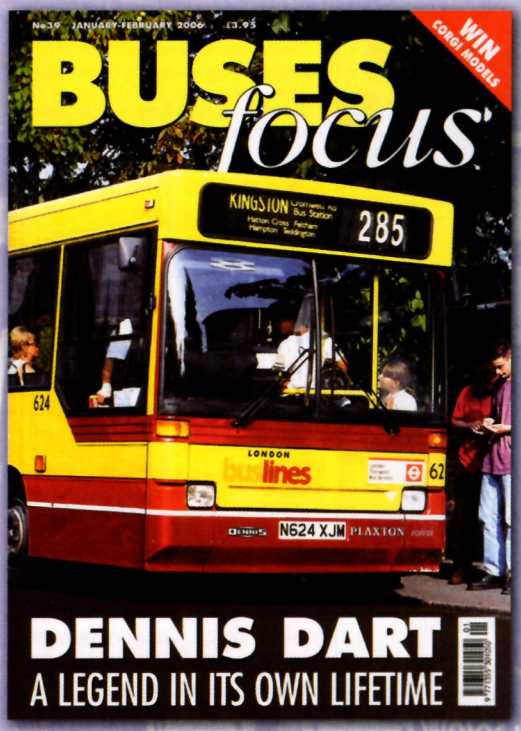

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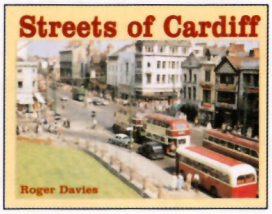

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Our popular 'Streets of ' series continues with this colourful look at the public transport scene in Cardiff , featuring both buses and trolleybuses, from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1970s, which also shows how the appearance of the city changed in this period.

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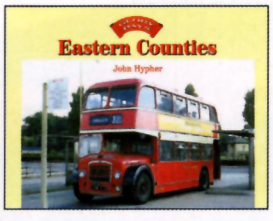

Glory Days: Eastern Counties

Eastern Counties dominated the provision of public transport in much of East Anglia from its formation in 1931. The book includes an excellent selection of both colour and mono images recalling the great variety of vehicles operated over the years, from Peterborough's electric trams to the Leyland National of the 1970s.

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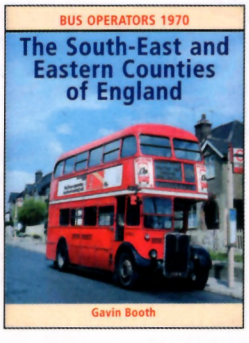

Bus Operators 1970s: Southeast England

This is the first title in a new series which steps back in time to examine in depth the great variety of operators, municipal, nationalised and independent, that existed in 1970 and to record, in a fine selection of colour and mono photos, the wide range of vehicles they used.

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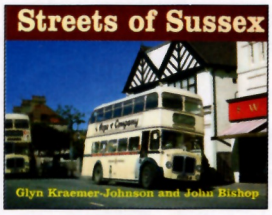
Published December Published



Streets of Sussex

The book portrays, in some 85 colour images, the buses and trolleybuses seen in service throughout Sussex from the mid-1950s through to the early 1970s and also shows the changing environment in which public transport operated over these years.

ISBN: 0 7110 3135 5 | Hardback | 184 x 240mm | 80pp
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Published December Published

Southdown Days

For enthusiasts, Southdown remains one of the most popular of all British bus and coach operators. This book examines Southdown operations in the 1950s and 60s recording the great variety of Southdown vehicles seen in this period. It also illustrates some of the other areas of transport interest that enthusiasts could enjoy by travelling on Southdown's extensive network.

ISBN: 0 7110 3077 4 | HB | 184mm x 240mm
96pp | c100 mono & colour photographs | **£16.99**

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Glory Days: United Counties

With its origins dating back to 1913, United Counties expanded to become the predominant bus operator in much of the rural East Midlands mostly operating vehicles manufactured largely by Bristol and ECW. The history of the company and its buses, through to the early 1970s, is recorded in a comprehensive selection of colour and mono photographs.

ISBN: 0 7110 3081 2 | HB | 184mm x 240mm
96pp | 74 b/w & 53 colour photographs | **£16.99**

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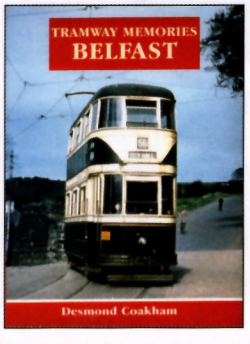
Bus Operators 1970: Scotland and North East England

In the second of the new 'Bus Operators 1970' series, Gavin Booth provides a snapshot of the great variety of buses operated in this area at the start of the 1970s. Covering the Scottish municipal operators, Tyneside PTE, the subsidiaries of both the NBC and the SBG and the major independents, the book is comprehensively illustrated throughout with both mono and colour photographs.

ISBN: 0 7110 3033 2 | HB
280mm x 215mm | 80pp
63 b/w & 101 colour photographs
£16.99

Available Now Available



Tramway Memories: Belfast

Published to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the introduction of the first electric tramcar services in the city in December 1905, the book provides a nostalgic journey around Belfast, concentrating on the period from the 1930s through to 1954, the year the last tramcars were replaced by trolley and motor buses.

ISBN: 0 7110 3101 0 | PB
282 x 213mm | 80pp
c175 mono photographs
£14.99

Published December Published

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When's the bus to Dunfermline? How much will it cost?

RICHARD DELAHOY finally finds a system that tells him the price of getting from A to B

In my November column, I pondered why bus travel information websites rarely tell passengers how much their journey will cost and asked how many other retail businesses find it so hard to tell potential customers what their products cost. The excellent news is that the Traveline Scotland site does indeed provide comprehensive fares information. Using technology developed by software house Journey Plan, **www.travelinescotland.com** provides almost everything you need to know about your journey.

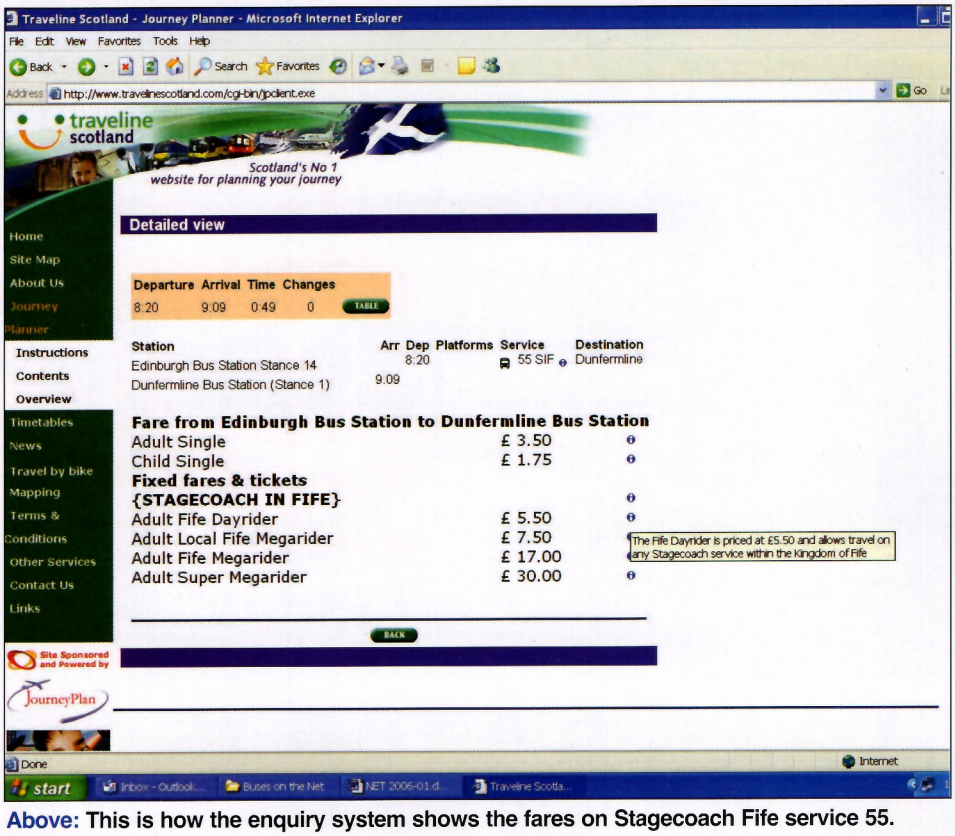
Journey Plan was supplied with the fares data from operators' electronic systems such as Wayfarer and Almex ticket machines, and integrated it with timetable and location information to deliver an integrated solution. So how does it work in practice?

From the home page, click on 'Journey Planner'. You can then input your 'to' and 'from' points, each defined as a town/city and then a location within that place. If you are not sure about the detailed location, simply leave that box blank. Then input the date and time of travel, and indicate any modes you don't want to use.

Thus, looking back to my trip to the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum (On the Net, May), I needed to get from Edinburgh city centre to Dunfermline bus station on a Sunday morning and wanted to go by bus, not train. I wasn't sure where the bus stopped in Edinburgh, so left that location field bank. I selected the bus station from a series of stops offered by the system, so clicked on 'submit' and in a flash, a full range of journeys was displayed.

A global view showed all trips around my desired time, with each trip detailed individually underneath, with departure and arrival times, service number, operator — and the standard fare, £3.50 in this case.

For each trip, it is then possible to click on 'stops' (showing a list of intermediate timing points and times), 'table' (a summary timetable) and 'fares', the latter giving a list of all available fare types, not just singles. For my selected journey, I was shown details of various Stagecoach Dayrider and Megarider tickets and by moving my mouse over the information icon, more details came up, explaining for instance that the £5.50 Fife Dayrider 'allows travel on any Stagecoach service within the Kingdom of Fife'.



Above: This is how the enquiry system shows the fares on Stagecoach Fife service 55.

Times by text

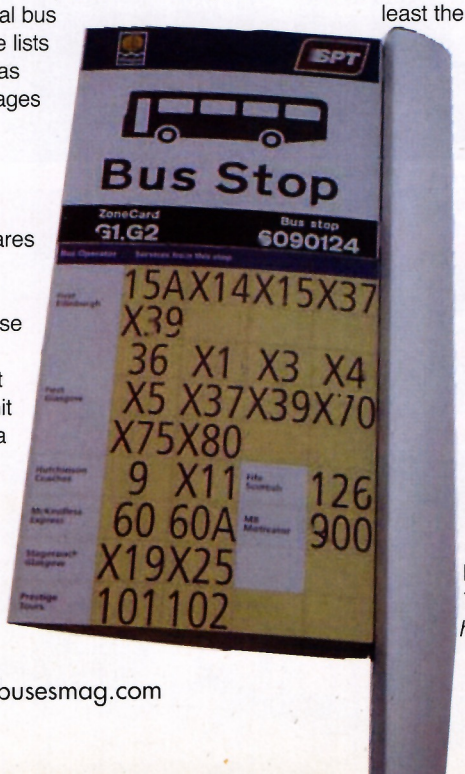
As well as giving travel times, the journey planner also shows an SMS code number for the bus stop and a separate page on the website, **txt2traveline**, explains how these codes can be sent by text message to a dedicated phone number — 0777 608 2608 — to receive a text message showing times of the next few buses. Read the instructions and you'll discover how you can refine your enquiry so that for example, texting '29724868.Newton Stewart!x359' would show just those service 359 buses going to Newton Stewart from Girvan. Sadly, there didn't appear to be any when I enquired.

The SMS codes are given in the journey planner, but another page on the site provides a complete list of the codes currently available — so far, only Dumfries & Galloway, Edinburgh and Fife have been completed. Reflecting just how many individual bus stops there are, the lists for those three areas alone run to 119 pages of stop names.

Minor gripes

At present the site does not include fares information for all operators, presumably because some smaller operators have not been able to submit the information in a suitable format. Also, in the stops list generated by the journey planner, it would be useful if this list also showed the SMS codes, to save having to trawl laboriously through the lists elsewhere on the site. But these are minor criticisms.

The site is easy to use and delivers far more useful information than any other comparable site I've yet seen. I believe Journey Plan is streets ahead of other software providers in the way it has integrated complex fares data from different bus operators. As I've commented before, if it can do it, why can't operators themselves — or at least the bigger groups?



Right: Every Scottish bus stop has been allocated its own unique identification number for the Journey Plan system.

Rubbish in Bristol?

If you sometimes wonder whether a transformation in travel really is for the better, take a look at **www.rubbishbuses.com** for an alternative view of services in Bristol. I must say my recent, albeit limited, experience of using buses there has not been as dire as the website claims.

As usual, links to this month's featured sites are available at **http://efe.showbus.com/web** *and I can be contacted at* **buses@signal-training.com**. *Thanks to Joe Lynch for his help this month.*

As a tribute to the late ARNOLD RICHARDSON (see p13), we are publishing this selection of 1950s and 1960s pictures from his PHOTOBUS archives. Sadly, in Arnold's absence we have been unable to identify the individual photographers' names, but are confident that Photobus will pass on reproduction fees in due course.

Above: Beneath the imposing Northumbrian structure of Bamburgh Castle in Arnold's native north-east England is United Auto U537 (937 JHN), an Eastern Coach Works-bodied Bristol MW5G. This 1959 bus was the only example in the fleet with 41 coach seats rather than 45 bus seats.

Centre left: Although best remembered for its Daimlers, Crossleys and Guys, Birmingham City Transport also bought 100 Leyland Titan PD2s in the immediate postwar period. Park Royal-bodied 2189 (JOJ 189) was one of a batch of 50 new in 1949/50; the other 50 had Leyland bodies.

Bottom left: This is for the reader who wrote to us a year or two ago commenting that Southdown 'Queen Mary' Leyland PD3s attract disproportionate coverage by comparison with their full-front counterparts with Ribble. This sunny view in Fleetwood shows 1540 (KCK 886), one of 105 PD3/4s new in 1957/58 with bodies built a few miles to the south by H. V. Burlingham in Blackpool. It carries advertisements for Ribble's travel agencies.

Above: Typically light 1950s traffic volumes surround Aberdeen Corporation 26 (BRS 526), the last of 10 Weymann-bodied AEC Regent IIIs delivered in 1946/47. Like other early Regent IIIs, these had London RT-type chassis with low bonnets and radiators. Just visible behind is one of 35 Crossley-bodied Daimler CVG6s new in 1954/55. Both have grey roofs, a feature Aberdeen discontinued in October 1964.

Above: Unlike all of the other operators whose buses are recalled on these two pages, Reliance of Sutton-on-the-Forest continues trading today and still operates into York city centre. JDN 712 was a rare combination of underfloor-engined Daimler Freeline chassis and Duple FS41 body.

Left: Manchester was one of the more reluctant operators of trolleybuses, running them between March 1938 and December 1966. This is 1308 (ONE 708), from the final batch of Burlingham-bodied BUT 9612Ts new in 1955, on the service operated jointly with Ashton-under-Lyne Corporation. This route survives today as part of the Stagecoach network.

TrawsCambria one year on

RHODRI CLARK shows how an old brand is gaining new life as the Welsh Assembly uses buses to fill gaps in the country's railway network

Arriva Cymru 2511 (CX05 AAJ), one of the Wright Commander-bodied VDL SB200s, at Llangollen while operating the X94 between Wrexham and Barmouth. JOHN YOUNG

Above: YJ55 BKF, one of Richards Brothers' two 12.6m Tempos on the X50, overtaking 42215 (R215 MSA), a First Cymru Dennis/Plaxton Pointer Dart cascaded from Aberdeen, on the X40. Ceredigion Council is providing First with three 12m Tempos for this service. CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Devolution has brought a quiet revolution to Welsh bus services. Wales led the way in provision of the Traveline information service and introducing countrywide free passes for pensioners and disabled people; Scotland and England are following suit.

A third initiative of the Welsh Assembly Government is the creation of long-distance routes to provide an attractive alternative to car travel between towns deprived of rail services. Long-distance in this context means 2hr or more, and the new TrawsCambria system is being forged mainly by upgrading and joining pre-existing services. This avoids abstracting revenue from parallel services and keeps revenue support to a minimum.

TrawsCambria is not a new name. Crosville used it for the daily coach service between North and South Wales. Arriva, which inherited the brand, agreed to its use for the expanded new network. The old service (701) was well used by students, offering cheap travel between most Welsh university towns. Aberystwyth, notably, was a major traffic generator because its rail service offers only indirect access to Swansea, Bangor and other significant places.

However, the service required a subsidy north of Aberystwyth. Switching the northern terminus from Holyhead to Llandudno, a major resort and shopping town, had little positive impact, so this route became the testbed for plans by the assembly's Long-distance Bus & Coach Group (now the TrawsCambria Group) formed mainly of operators and local authorities. When the 701 was severed in 2003, two-hourly X32 (Aberystwyth-Bangor) replaced the once-a-day northern section and incorporated shorter distance routes in Gwynedd.

The Commanders arrive

In January 2005, Arriva Cymru took delivery of the first of 10 Wright Commander-bodied VDL SB200s to the new TrawsCambria specification of low-floor access, climate control, semi-coach seating, bicycle rack, closed circuit television cameras inside and outside, and extra luggage capacity. They cost £125,000 each.

The first went straight on to the X32. The following month, others relaunched Arriva's X94 (Wrexham-Barmouth), with doubled frequency and intersecting (and usually connecting) with X32 at Dolgellau. TrawsCambria Group chairman Brian Bigwood says: 'X94 was predominantly commercial and Arriva took a big risk in going to an hourly service.'

Local authorities continue to support some elements of the X94, so Wrexham-based GHA Coaches runs two return trips on Sundays, in between Arriva workings. GHA has no vehicles to the new TrawsCambria specification, so passengers encounter differences in quality. This illustrates the complexity of applying the TrawsCambria blueprint within tendering and competition parameters.

Next to be converted was the southern section of the 701. This became the hourly X40 service, shared by First Cymru and Arriva, between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen. By also replacing shorter-distance services, it eliminated the need to change buses at Lampeter for many journeys on the Aberystwyth-Carmarthen corridor. Two journeys per day still extend to Swansea and Cardiff. At other times, TrawsCambria passengers for these cities need to use trains from Carmarthen, but there isn't yet a combined rail and bus ticket.

Because TrawsCambria must not abstract revenue from established bus or rail services, pensioners' free passes are not valid on the two workings east of Carmarthen to Swansea and Cardiff as Arriva Trains Wales, First Cymru, First Great Western and Stagecoach Megabus operate interurban services along the M4 corridor. Some pensioners still mistakenly believe their free passes are not valid on any of TrawsCambria, as was the case on the 701.

If TrawsCambria is to be promoted as a network, passengers will expect through ticketing and Brian Bigwood says the most likely solution is an extension of the new Tocyn Taith arrangement in North Wales, where passengers pay for a day's unlimited bus and rail travel within two or more zones.

Richards and Stagecoach become involved

Aberystwyth gained a third TrawsCambria route with the launch of the two-hourly X50 service to Cardigan in October, which Richards Brothers operates (it already was the incumbent operator). Most workings run between Aberaeron and Cardigan, with Aberystwyth passengers using X40 connections at Aberystwyth. Richards has two new 12.6m Optare Tempos to the TrawsCambria specification.

An Aberystwyth-Haverfordwest service is to be created by combining the X50 with Richards's 412 between Cardigan and Haverfordwest, county town of Pembrokeshire. Also to be converted in this area is Arriva's 550 (which will become X550), serving New Quay en route between Aberystwyth and Cardigan. The X40 and 550 workings will require ten 12m

Tempos, three operated by First Cymru on the X40. The final achievement in the first year was the award of a contract to Stagecoach for new route 704 (Brecon-Newtown). This will employ two buses — with bicycle trailers rather than racks — and is being hailed as the first direct bus between those towns since August 1970, although in 1993 they were linked by short-lived TrawsCambria service 702 between Mold and Cardiff.

Brecon, a rural town with no rail station, is an unusual place for a TrawsCambria service to terminate, and the 704 may be extended to Merthyr Tydfil or Cardiff. For now, through ticketing is being organised between the 704 and the X43 service of Sixty-Sixty Coaches between Brecon, Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff (not a TrawsCambria route).

In due course, Brecon could become another TrawsCambria hub with routes west to Llandovery and possibly Carmarthen, and east to Abergavenny. These might be linked into one service. Talks have been held with Stagecoach about upgrading its Hereford-Brecon-Swansea service to TrawsCambria status.

Farther north in Powys, a service linking Llanidloes to Shrewsbury via Welshpool may be created, connecting with the Crossgates (G3) and Arriva (525) services between Llanidloes and Aberystwyth. Brian Bigwood believes this could extend to Llandrindod Wells (county town of Powys) via Rhayader, perhaps as a TrawsCambria route. He also envisages a Llandrindod-Hereford route via Kington.

These would enable TrawsCambria to plug most railway gaps in rural Wales with the significant exception of north-east towns like Ruthin and Mold (county towns of Denbighshire and Flintshire respectively). Both councils want TrawsCambria to be extended into the region, but existing commercial services complicate the situation.

More connections, fewer stops?

Farther into the future, the network might be linked with local bus routes serving towns like Pwllheli and Llangefni, which TrawsCambria currently misses by a few miles. Timetable co-ordination is not an issue where there are frequent local services (such as Porthmadog-Pwllheli and Bangor-Llangefni), but potential users may balk at having to pay separately for each leg of the journey. Tocyn Taith would overcome this. The Gwynedd Red Rover ticket (£4.95 for a day's travel in Gwynedd, Anglesey and part of Conwy) sets a precedent, covering the entire X32 and X94.

Flexible ticketing could turn TrawsCambria services from long local bus services into faster limited stop routes. Currently, they serve most settlements en route, and the X32 takes 3hr 20min between Aberystwyth and Bangor, about an hour more then by car. If local buses were used on feeder routes without financial penalty for passengers, long-distance services could then omit some detours, but the feeder arrangement could only work financially if faster services attracted more passengers.

Being a Jack of all trades affects vehicles as well as schedules. The assembly requires low-floor access, so coaches with small low-floor sections for a wheelchair were deemed unsuitable as most passengers would need to climb steps inside. Consequently, the Commanders and Tempos have no underfloor luggage space and passengers have lost the views over the hedgerows from high-floor coaches.

'Manufacturers have been slow to provide vehicles suitable for such ventures,' says Brian Bigwood. 'There are no low-floor semi-coaches available. It's been difficult to get a high-quality vehicle for a high-quality service.' Don't expect to see any more Commanders on the network. 'We didn't have the Tempo when we ordered the Commanders. The Tempo is in another class. It seems to be the best that's out there are the moment.'

Former Stagecoach manager Leo Markham, who was appointed as TrawsCambria's first co-ordinator in August and is pushing through a training programme that focuses on disability awareness, customer care and knowledge of the wider network and connections, admits that the Commanders' seating and legroom has been raised as a critical issue. The Tempos have more generous legroom and individual seats.

All the new buses represent a marked improvement over those used on many of the intermediate routes converted to the new specification; the Tempos replaced well-worn high-floor minibuses. 'When you look at some vehicles used in Powys, introducing TrawsCambria is more than a step change. It's going to be a staircase change,' says Brian Bigwood.

Facilities for waiting passengers are currently out of step with the vehicles. Brian Bigwood's aspiration is for heated waiting rooms and possibly cafés at major interchanges. He wants to address shortcomings at Dolgellau, Aberystwyth and Brecon. Dolgellau could gain a bus station instead of services interchanging at the cramped Eldon Square.

A logo rather than a livery

TrawsCambria does not have a bespoke livery. Each operator applies a large logo to the vehicle sides and small badges to the front. 'We recognise that each operator has its own identity and we put the TrawsCambria identity on top of that,' says Brian Bigwood. 'If somebody has a complaint, it's no use saying, "I want to phone TrawsCambria". They need to phone the operator.' Operators should ensure that the electronic (LED) destination display alternates between 'TrawsCambria' and the destination, but some have been slow to manage that aspect of the technology.

One possible drawback of operators' standard liveries is that the buses do not advertise TrawsCambria in the way that Stagecoach's Megabus or Blazefield's The Witch Way sell themselves to non-users. 'We need to let people know it isn't just the old TrawsCambria, it's a new TrawsCambria,' admits Brian Bigwood. 'If you go on the Internet and pick up TrawsCambria, so many sites . . . still refer to the old 701.' A fine example is the website of Gwynedd Council — the biggest sponsor to date of the TrawsCambria. At the time of writing, this still informs visitors: 'Crosville Wales operates the TrawsCambria service from South Wales to Dolgellau, Porthmadog, Caernarfon and Bangor.'

On the positive side, Brian Bigwood recently overheard a young woman on an X32 telling someone over her mobile phone that she was 'on the TrawsCambria' rather than 'on the bus'. He is also encouraged by patronage growth on the first routes to be converted. Figures are not yet available for the others, but he had to stand from Aberystwyth to Machynlleth on a recent X32 journey.

More opportunities for independents

Independents stand a good chance of winning contracts for new routes, especially if the assembly continues to fund the vehicles via grants to local authorities, as that deprives the big groups of their bidding advantage from bulk ordering of vehicles.

Brian Bigwood thinks operators not involved in TrawsCambria stand to gain. In Gwynedd, where many passengers use either free passes or the Gwynedd Red Rover, TrawsCambria has increased overall service frequencies. There is evidence that local bus services between those towns are also carrying extra passengers attracted by the more flexible travel options.

Extending Tocyn Taith zonal fares across Wales could benefit parallel and connecting bus services. The proposed Llandovery-Carmarthen route would parallel the Heart of Wales railway, which has just four trains daily, between Llandovery and Llandeilo. The combined bus/rail frequency of train would make public transport more appealing — which is what this is all about.

Below: The Commanders, like the newer Tempos, have rear bicycle racks, but safety concerns restrict their use to stops where there is a lay-by. In some places, children have been hanging on the racks of moving buses. RHODRI CLARK

YOU WRITE

To BUSES, PO Box 14644, Leven KY9 1WX or Fax 01333 340 608 or
e-mail buseseditor@btconnect.com (Please quote full postal address if communicating by e-mail)

Buses and the Tyne & Wear Metro

Howard Piltz (You Write last month) has perhaps unwittingly given the main reason for my concern about some aspects of the Tyne & Wear Metro in the second paragraph of his letter. This is the huge cost to the public purse that such systems entail.

It's history now, but the original creation of the Metro involved compulsory truncation of many long established bus routes on Tyneside. And if Howard had been in Gateshead in the early 1980s, he would have met some very unhappy people indeed. Termination of bus routes in Gateshead rather than Newcastle was necessary to create the demand for cross-river journeys and thus justify building a new bridge.

I have no problem with the Metro or any other rail system as part of a genuinely integrated network, which in large measure is what we have now in Tyne & Wear. For example, we willingly feed many passengers from the Washington area into Heworth Metro because it makes good sense for everyone to do so.

Where I have been more critical of Nexus recently concerns the Sunderland extension, built at a further substantial cost to the public purse. The core of this extension follows a long established railway line, but in fairness provides better access to the rest of the system. The South Hylton extension from Sunderland was rather more questionable in following a long abandoned railway alignment.

The end result of the Sunderland extension has been to cause significant loss of patronage to bus services along the line of route, and particularly in South Tyneside, while not meeting its own patronage targets. In late-November, we learned that service on the South Hylton section of route will be halved because of low patronage. Given the criticism meted out to bus operators who trim services when demand falls, it will be interesting to see how Tyne & Wear politicians react.

I am always slightly nervous about implying criticism of Nexus because some of what it does is very good. However, I am not alone in believing that the Metro receives an unfair proportion of public expenditure compared with the bus network, which after all serves a much greater proportion of the Tyne & Wear population. If a small part of the money spent on the South Hylton extension had been devoted to creating priorities for local bus services, a great deal more public good would have been delivered for a lot less money. This is one area where I would like to see PTEs having comparable powers to Transport for London in directing the allocation of road space in congested areas.

Privatisation of the Metro is something of a red herring. The damage may be done when the decision to build a system is taken rather than decisions about who should operate.

Christopher Moyes
Chief Executive, the Go-Ahead Group, Newcastle upon Tyne

Where are the Leeds park-&-rides?

I refer to the letter from Rob Donald of the PTE Group (You Write last month). Would he like to enlighten *Buses* readers as to the whereabouts of any bus-based park-&-ride sites within Leeds? I have no knowledge of any specific bus park-&-ride services, as there are in York. Where are we meant to find them?

a) Along the routes of guided busways? b) At local railway stations such as Crossgates or Garforth? c) In supermarket car parks such as Tesco, Seacroft or Asda, Killingbeck?

When travelling into Leeds I usually use the reliable Yorkshire Coastliner services as do many other Tadcaster residents.

Chris Clarkson
Tadcaster

Why deregulation is still crazy

I have to agree with Dr Roger Sexton (You Write, last month) that bus deregulation is crazy. It was introduced by a government that wanted to reduce public expenditure on buses regardless of the consequences on other modes of transport.

At the time, there was a failure to acknowledge that there were parts of the country where the motorist travelling alone frequently found it cheaper to travel in his or her own car than use the bus whenever free parking was available. The likelihood of increased traffic congestion was thus ignored. Today, almost everybody suffers the ill effects of traffic congestion.

Requiring local authorities to put uneconomic services out to competitive tender has encouraged operators to increase fares in order that marginal services remain commercial and has made it more difficult for buses to compete with the car on price, let alone on comfort, convenience and reliability. With their tight budgets, local authorities have had to be selective about the uneconomic services they buy back. Priority frequently has been given to services carrying schoolchildren, to those where passenger numbers are high and where there is a clear social requirement.

Bus companies receive a huge amount of money for providing pensioners' concessionary fares. This money should only make good the fares revenue forgone by the companies in allowing pensioners to travel at concessionary fares, so it is not a subsidy to bus companies. It is a subsidy to pensioners who show their appreciation of it by heavy use of buses in the middle of the day on weekdays. It is democratically accountable because local authorities, together with central government, decide the scope of pensioners' concessions and the pensioners decide how much each company receives through the use of their concessions.

There needs to be some regulation of bus services. Even deregulation is a form of regulation. For example, some local authority expenditure on the production of comprehensive timetable books is wasted because services are changed between press date and the date the book reaches the potential passenger. This requires some restriction on service change dates. Some coordination of services needs to be made in the public interest. It makes no sense when two parallel services are timetabled to operate in convoy throughout the day. There also needs to be timetable integration with railway services.

No method of regulation will increase evening and Sunday services outside London without either more money being put into bus operation or the cost of travel by private car being increased sufficiently to persuade motorists to leave their cars at home and travel by bus. As there is no good evidence that putting money into bus services has ameliorated traffic congestion in outer London, traffic congestion and bus services will get worse until a politician is prepared to substantially increase the cost of travel by car.

Guy S. Salt
Sanderstead, Surrey

Working with Alan Westwell at GMB

It was with a degree of pleasure that I read your article detailing the career of Alan Westwell in August *Buses*.

This is a very small industry in which we work. It has produced its fair share of truly outstanding busmen who have made a huge contribution to the promotion and achievement of excellence in delivering service quality, innovation and furthering the cause of the humble bus in our everyday lives.

The Omnibus Society recently recognised many of these personalities such as Geoffrey Hilditch, Peter Hendy, Brian Souter, Brian King and Werner Heubeck to name a few. Alan Westwell richly deserved the honour of being recognised in *Buses* for his not inconsiderable achievements in the industry.

All too often, the enthusiast community does not understand the role of directors and managers in getting the bus service out on the road each day. Why should it? Enthusiasts are more likely to come into everyday contact with the driver or supervisor than a director or manager. Everybody makes a contribution to putting the product on the road and making sure it is on time, presentable and safe.

I have worked for some outstanding busmen, some of whom are named in this letter, in good times and bad. I will always fondly remember my late night meetings with Alan Westwell when I worked for him at Greater Manchester Buses. At the time, I probably didn't appreciate those late night encounters with Alan in Bury or Oldham garage and neither did my wife, come to think of it. However Alan was always a modicum of civility, full of energy and pure common sense and I really appreciated his wise leadership.

To conclude, it's especially nice to see *Buses* recognising the architects of the industry with the most recent feature on Brian Souter and Stagecoach (October *Buses*). Let's not forget the other unsung heroes who often do not get the recognition they deserve, such as Frank Carter, Chris Moyes and Giles Fearnley to drop a few names into the mix with apologies to all those I have missed.

Samuel Simpson,
Operations Director, Reading Transport

Remembering Mike Dare

Although your short obituary to Mike Dare (*Buses* November) correctly titled him as a 'trolleybus expert', I thought I should write to record that he had wider interests in the whole bus industry. He spent some time as a young man driving for Chiltern Queens and he was an inspiring grown-up bus enthusiast for young bus spotters like me in the 1960s.

When my then teenage daughter first met him about 30 years after I did, his gift of engaging with young people through teaching showed up immediately in the precise advice he gave her about exams and exam subjects. He is missed.

Stephen Jolly
Milton Keynes

Buses in Durban

The feature on Durban buses (Pictureview, November) was of interest, but I would like to add a few comments.

The only double-deck buses in Durban are the two Ricksha vehicles, ex-Johannesburg Daimler Fleetlines, although there are double-deck coaches on inter-city service. The Marcopolo-bodied bus 4268 is a Volvo B7R, one of 100 bought recently by the privatised Durban Transport. The name of the depot is Ntuzuma, not Etuzuma.

Martin Curtis has missed the most interesting bus in Durban, N. R. Moses's 1960 halfcab Leyland Tiger OPS4/5, which must now be unique.

G. P. M. Strachan
Graaff-Reinet, South Africa

First for Blackburn?

Blackburn Borough Transport should be sold to a company that can regenerate the current public transport system in the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen.

The drivers were in the town centre giving out leaflets with information on how to stop the buyout (*Buses* October) and also taking the names of people who feel equally that the buyout would be unnecessary by telling them that their route is at risk.

To my knowledge, there has been no talk about routes being axed or drivers' jobs being lost. Rumours are flying around that Arriva North West may be the buyer. I feel that First should make an offer as it is better equipped to turn Blackburn's transport system around.

Bus users may feel that Blackburn Borough Transport should stay trading as they feel that the company is reliable, but maybe the services would be better than now if another company took over.

Steve Savage
Blackburn

When 'nationwide' excludes West Lothian

I recently invested £325 of my hard-earned cash in a FirstGroup student nationwide national pass. As soon as it was available, I signed up for one. The website promised delivery in a swift three days. Okay, two-and-a-half weeks later, some £22 lighter after having to buy First Glasgow Student FirstWeek tickets and some terse phone calls of 'Where is my pass? And will I be reimbursed for money lost?' the answer was to keep the tickets and claim the money back.

The pass finally arrived. I called up FirstInfo to ask about any compensation for my £22. 'No chance' was the phrase. The FirstInfo managers had changed their minds. It was not their fault. There had been printing problems.

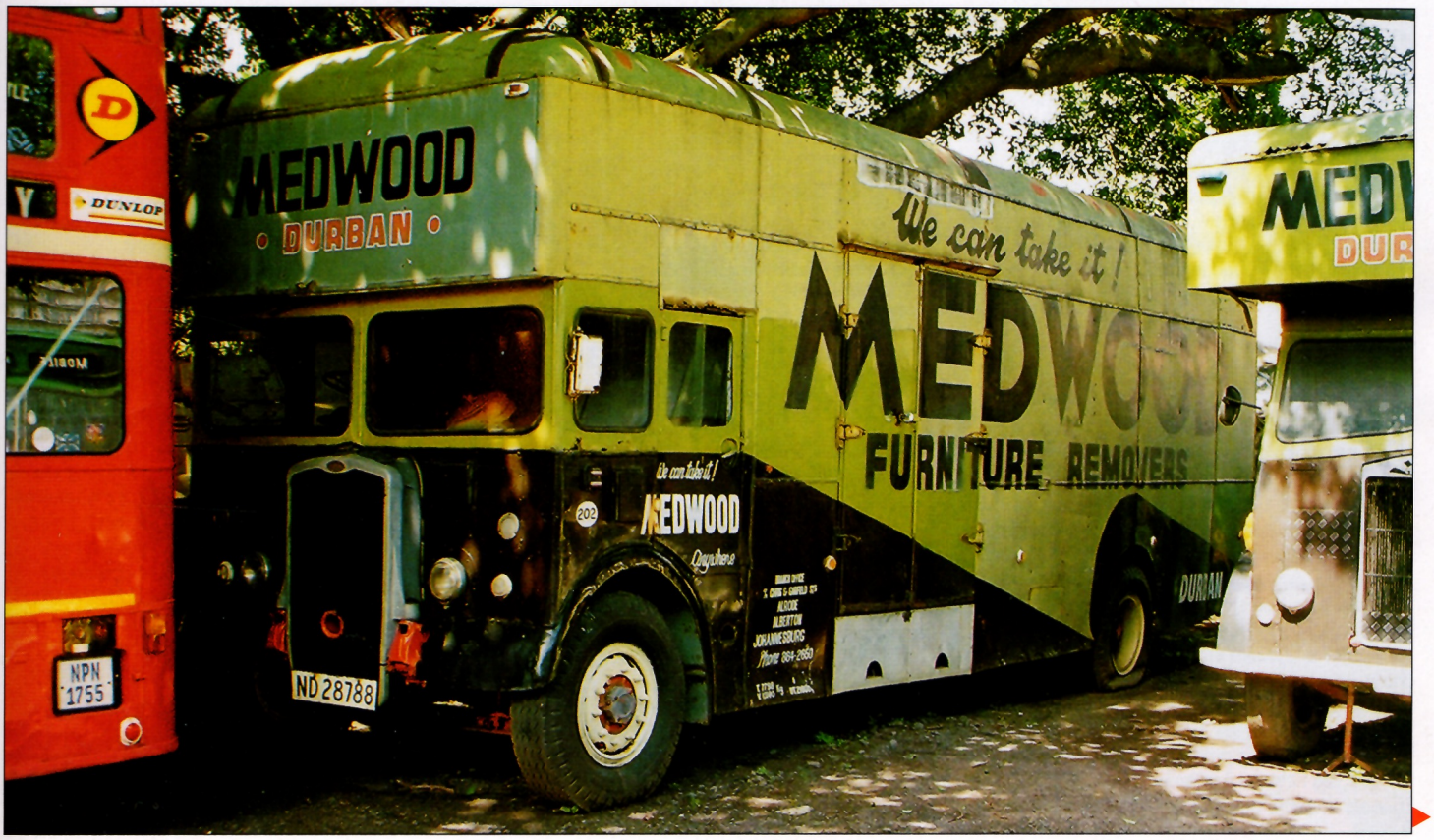
So, armed with my pass I travelled on a bus to college. I presented my pass to the driver and he didn't react. This isn't unusual when you board a First Glasgow bus, so I assumed he accepted me on and I walked to find a seat. Then, when I had walked a fair distance from him, he shouted, 'Oi! Let us see that pass, you' in the most accusative way possible, like I had just waved a piece of paper at him with the worst insult on Earth.

In front of a fully laden bus, I handed him my pass. He snatched it, took a good look at it and then handed it back with no further acknowledgement. The same day after college, I went into Glasgow city centre, again with a driver having a closer look at my pass.

I then boarded a First Edinburgh service to West Lothian and the driver put his hand up to stop me and said, 'You can't use this pass on this bus.' I told him, 'This is a nationwide pass. I can use this on all FirstGroup services.' He replied, 'Not on this one, you're not' and that is all he said. Again embarrassed, I left the bus and got the help of a First Glasgow inspector (who, unlike the Livingston depot driver, was polite and helpful) and he told me, 'It's obvious he hasn't been reading his notices'. He came up with me and managed to get me on board and for that I'm grateful to him.

Remember that I have paid £325 up front. I'm not expecting the red carpet, but for a full-time student it is a large investment and I expect to receive good service. I reported the incident to First Edinburgh customer services and it sent me

Below: While Martin Curtis may have missed the Tiger mentioned in Mr Strachan's letter, he found this rarity at the Durban Historic Transport Museum. It is one of hundreds of Bristol LWLs exported to South Africa in the late-1940s and early-1950s. While most were bodied as buses, this was fitted with a pantechnicon body and remained at work until 1988. It was illustrated in March 1959 *Buses Illustrated*, as this magazine was known then. MARTIN S. CURTIS



an e-mail of apology along with a bit to show drivers reaffirming that the pass 'can be used in all FirstGroup operating areas except London'.

Over the next few days, more of the same happened with First Glasgow and Edinburgh drivers looking warily at my pass and wanting a further look — with more of the same lack of manners and having to see the e-mail from customer service. I fully understand that drivers do a tough job, keeping to tight timetables and helping fight fraud, dealing with some really unpleasant and simply unwanted customers. But the lack of basic manners and respect to the everyday customer is beyond unacceptable.

All it takes is to say, 'Excuse me, I'm not familiar with your pass, sir. Could I have a closer look to familiarise myself with it for the future?' This would avoid any potential conflict or simple loss of goodwill. Good customer service and manners can work towards avoiding confrontation or violent incidents, but this is lost on a significant number of bus drivers across the UK and not just those of FirstGroup.

Steven Ho
Glasgow

Bus lanes and errant car drivers

I was interested to read (In London, November) that 835,000 motorists — 10% more than the previous year — received £100 penalty notices for driving in bus lanes in London in 2004. Will the motorists learn? I doubt it, but it shows just how selfish and inconsiderate many motorists are these days.

I am all for them being given penalty notices for driving in bus and taxi lanes, but I think the penalty should be £300. Then they would take a lot more notice. I would also like to see any vehicle parked in bus/taxi lanes towed away, given a £300 penalty notice and be charged for towing away and storing the vehicle.

Something else that should be done is to stop delivery lorries from parking in bus/taxi lanes, which are meant to help buses save time. If they are held up, they lose valuable time that they may have made up earlier. All delivery lorries should be given penalty notices and a set time for deliveries on Mondays to Saturdays.

Bus lanes are only worth using if they are kept clear by the powers that be doing their job properly. If they are not kept clear, they defeat the object of having them.

Let us all hope that the money from the penalty notices issued in London is being put back into public transport.

Stephen J. Ryder
Cambridge

Buses need to run faster than now

I am a regular bus user and also drive a car and can see the merits of both means of transport.

The bus gets you to enjoy your surroundings, but buses can be extremely slow. Every weekend, I go to Beamish Museum as a volunteer and make the journey by car in half an hour, whereas if I went by bus it could take about one-and-three-quarter hours. And I have the worry of getting to the bus stop on time.

In my journeying, I come across bus lanes (which are now 'no car' lanes) and find they benefit both the bus and the car. The bus has a free run in one lane and the car in the other and the cars are not held up every time at bus stops.

On the question of profit, who would invest in a bus company if it wasn't going to make a profit? They can only make a profit if they provide a good service. Perhaps one mistake these days is in subsidising services. A bus company has no incentive to run them at its own expense if someone else will pay it to do so.

Arthur Staddon
Sunderland

The definition of selfish behaviour

So Graham Davies (You Write, November) is dismayed to find that I consider car use selfish. Perhaps you will allow me to try to explain to him my position.

I believe, and most importantly practise, that use of a car in urban areas — where there is adequate provision of alternative public transport — is indeed a selfish action. Increased pollution; unnecessary use of limited fuel resources; adding to congestion to the detriment of others, I could go on.

In my original letter (You Write, September) I used the phrase 'selfish insistence', implying that there may be occasions where car use might be appropriate, for example where there is inadequate disabled provision; an emergency; or security at night. But I also suggested that 'macho' use of the car as a first choice purely for convenience rather taking the expensively provided public transport option has a limited lifespan looking forward.

Just to make sure that I am accurately being branded as considering certain car use selfish, I looked up my 1,583-page *Collins Dictionary*, and sure enough on p1,220 the following definition appears: **Selfish:** *adj:* Chiefly concerned with one's own interest, advantage etc. esp. to the exclusion of the interests of others.

So well done Mr Davies. You got my message, and I am delighted to repeat it, always in the knowledge that I am happy to point out others' selfishness in using cars in urban areas where there is a proper alternative, rather than actually undertaking that selfish act myself. I also wish to make it clear that, unlike Mr Davies, I have no desire to own and run a chauffeur driven limousine. I will use my hard-earned cash for more family and ecologically friendly activities.

Harry L. Barker
Tarporley, Cheshire

Bus industry has squandered my goodwill

I have followed the correspondence regarding the relations between bus and private car use.

I write as one who has held a driving licence for 35 years. However, I have always tried to use public transport when practicable, because I am aware that we cannot go on using up fossil fuels and contributing to global warming without thought for future generations. I have often gone for several years without a car.

However, I find myself driving more and more. The sheer frustration of waiting for buses that run late or not at all is a major push factor. There are little niggles, such as having to wait outside in the rain until the very minute the bus is scheduled to leave, or after that time, while the driver sits inside — putting the customer in his or her place. Nobody likes to feel that he/she is a second class citizen, and most (not all) people do have a choice.

Some bus drivers do the industry no favours when they assume that a bus has right of way all the time, even if parked vehicles obstruct their side of the road, so that they feel free to barge their way through on the wrong side of the road.

In short, the bus industry had and may regain my goodwill, but has squandered it too often.

John Ball
Falmouth

Seat design is a letdown over longer distances

As a lifelong enthusiast and regular bus user, it concerns me that apart from London and a few specific areas, bus travel is diminishing. Operators nationally must constantly be examining their businesses to try and establish new methods of getting the public to use their services.

Having given this problem a great deal of thought, and having read numerous articles about various initiatives to get people out of their cars and on to the bus, I am convinced that comfort is a major issue. As an average height male of 5ft 9in, all too often I find there is insufficient room to allow you to sit properly on a bus seat. The space between seats leaves a lot to be desired and the design of the seat often leads to a most uncomfortable journey.

The general trend is to pack as many seats as possible into the vehicle and this is now moving on to coach travel. Too many coach seats are short on the seating area, giving no support for the back of your legs. This, in turn, leads to discomfort and unrest on a longer journey.

Perhaps bodybuilders, their seat designers, bus operators and their vehicle buying teams should try travelling on their vehicles. Then they would appreciate the problem. By giving more consideration to comfort, we may get more people out of their cars and back on to buses and coaches.

G. Harrison
Newcastle upon Tyne

Rule of the road: can you help?

I am currently writing what I believe will be the first complete history of the rule of the road worldwide.

Although Sweden in 1967 is the best-known example, traffic was changed from one side of the road to the other in many places during the 20th century. I am aware that, finding themselves left with bus fleets with doors on the wrong side, bus operators are perhaps most affected by a road rule change and that, in some countries, buses have been crudely converted for loading on the driver's side.

I would love to hear from any *Buses* reader who has any information or photos that may be of interest to me.

Michael Page
Dunbar
zvxqj@yahoo.com

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BUSES

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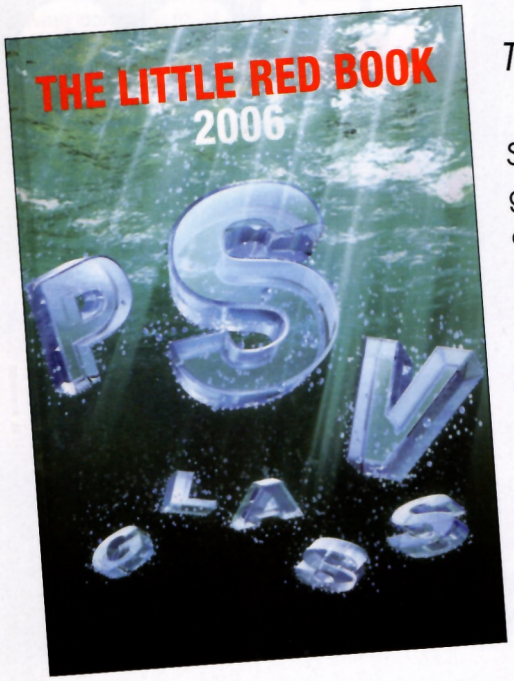

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New for LRB 2007 is the re-naming of the Tramway & Light Transit Equipment to Rapid Transit/Priority Equipment reflecting the increased emphasis on bus-based rapid transit systems rather than rail.

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Exploring our heritage by bus

DAVE JOHNSON contrasts two services to destinations in the Heart of England.

Bespoke bus services to heritage attractions are fairly common throughout England, especially on summer Sundays, but they are notoriously difficult to market and publicise. With a limited period of operation, it is difficult to justify a large (or any) marketing budget, although it is depressing to see many such services consequently running near empty.

Having sampled several of them in recent years, I've selected two 2005 services to consider in detail: the Heritage Hopper Bus between Banbury and Leamington Spa and the Heritage Coach Service linking Chesterfield with Hardwick Hall and Bolsover Castle. The former operated on just 10 Sundays in 2005 while the latter ran on 28 Sundays, Thursdays and bank holiday Mondays through the summer.

Both were supported by a high quality colour leaflet with a clear timetable, details of tourist attractions en route and claimed to link with main line train services. However, as anyone who has experienced Sunday morning rail travel will testify, engineering work frequently means that the published timetable is changed at short notice. So only the most enthusiastic and committed public transport user would trust such connections when planning a family day out.

The Hardwick service had just one departure from Chesterfield station, while you would have had a near 3hr wait if you missed the first journey from either Leamington Spa or Banbury stations.

Available from tourist information centres and main attractions

Leaflets for both services were readily available from tourist information centres in the region and also at the attractions served. The leaflets at the attractions are probably too late for most visitors, although the Hardwick leaflet did promote a shuttle service between attractions based on its trump card. It is operated by Cosy Coach Tours' splendidly restored 1948 Duple-bodied Bedford OB ATS 408. This bus was operated originally by Meffan's of Kirriemuir and was rescued by members of the Whitwell Bus Museum Project in 1991 after 20 years lying in a shed at Earnside Coaches of Glenfarg.

Both services offered day rover tickets shown clearly in the leaflets, although some motorists would consider these expensive given that all tourist attractions offer free parking. Indeed, I was amazed (and pleased) that two women paid £5 to park at Chesterfield station while a family of four paid £18 to visit attractions less than 10 miles from home.

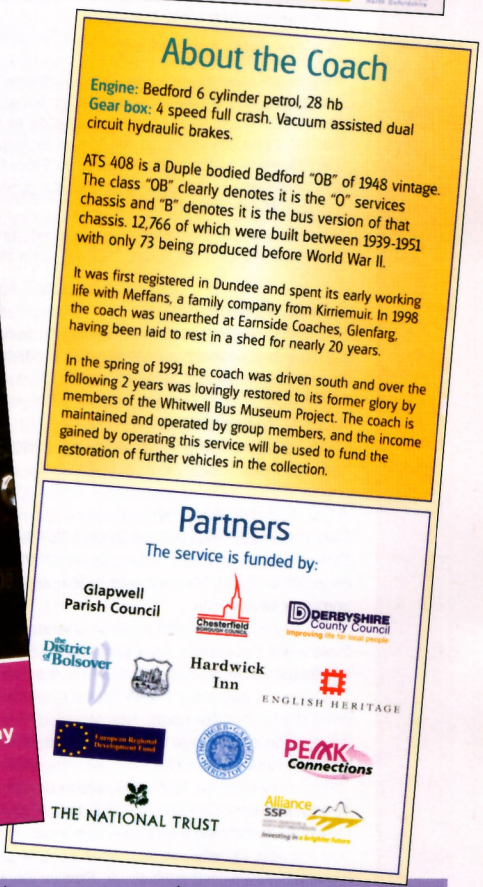
Neither leaflet indicated the opening times of attractions served, so the unwary could arrive at Upton House about 2hr before the hall opens and 25min before the grounds open. Furthermore, neither of the event days listed at the Heritage Motor Centre was during the bus season, so why mention them? Admission prices were quoted and the Derbyshire service offered 20% discount vouchers to bus users. Even so, a visit to both Bolsover Castle and Hardwick Hall — as suggested in the leaflet — would have cost a family £27.

The vintage service was numbered C1 and showed this on the destination blind, although it would be difficult to miss the OB. However, neither route number nor operator was shown on the Warwickshire leaflet. Derbyshire not only subsidised the vintage service, but also included it in its North East Derbyshire timetable book (although not in the Peak District book) and on its route maps and Derbyshire Wayfarer bus/rail network ticket.

In contrast, the Heritage Hopper Bus was not included in Warwickshire's area leaflets, although these were reissued in June and included several once-a-week Flexibus services.

Both services played an important role in accessing some otherwise difficult-to-reach tourist destinations by public transport and I hope that both will be repeated in 2006. In particular, no enthusiast should miss the opportunity to ride on an OB in public service; it will even convey bicycles in the boot and the driver and conductor are true enthusiasts.

Bus Times 2005
Heritage Coach Service C1
Peak District's Historic Border Country
CHESTERFIELD & BOLSOVER
Chesterfield – Bolsover – Hardwick – Sutton Scarsdale
Discount Vouchers INSIDE
Days of Operation
29th - 30th May (Spring Bank)
Then every Sunday & Bank Holiday Monday
from 29th May to 11th September 2005
Every Thursday from 30th June to
1st September 2005


About the Coach
Engine: Bedford 6 cylinder petrol, 28 hb
Gear box: 4 speed full crash. Vacuum assisted dual circuit hydraulic brakes.
ATS 408 is a Duple bodied Bedford "OB" of 1948 vintage. The class "OB" clearly denotes it is the "O" services chassis and "B" denotes it is the bus version of that chassis. 12,766 of which were built between 1939-1951 with only 73 being produced before World War II.
It was first registered in Dundee and spent its early working life with Meffans, a family company from Kirriemuir. In 1998 the coach was unearthed at Earnside Coaches, Glenfarg, having been laid to rest in a shed for nearly 20 years.
In the spring of 1991 the coach was driven south and over the following 2 years was lovingly restored to its former glory by members of the Whitwell Bus Museum Project. The coach is maintained and operated by group members, and the income gained by operating this service will be used to fund the restoration of further vehicles in the collection.
Partners
The service is funded by:
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Alliance SSP

We want to hear from readers, operators and transport authorities about how the industry is tackling the challenge of imparting accessible information to the travelling public — whether in timetables, leaflets or maps, at bus stops, bus stations or on the Internet. If you find items of interest (tell us about the good just as much as about the bad) and could write about 600 words on the subject, accompanied by photographs and/or publicity material, please contact the Editor at the Leven address shown on p2 or send an e-mail to **buseseditor@btconnect.com**

English and Welsh reports (no photographs) should be sent to: **John G. Lidstone, 15 Beach Court, Rampart Street, Shoeburyness, Essex, SS3 9AF,** marking your envelope **'Fleet News'**) E-mail text messages (no attachments or photographs, please) to: **fleetnews@lineone.net.**

IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Cook's doubles its Solo fleet**
- **Johnson Bros. buys Gash Daimler**
- **Oxford B10Bs for Solent Blue Line**
- **People's Express licence is cut**
- **Val's Classic sells surplus VALs**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in italic type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VLT 48*), with the most recent given first.

A-Line, Gateshead

This company has taken over Newcastle service 6 (Central Station-Jesmond Vale) using recently acquired Optare Solo M850/B23F W291 EYG.

Acorn, Tamworth

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 YK53 BTU is here from Hutchinson, York.

ACE Travel, Aintree

Recent acquisitions are Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall B26F P404 KAV, P853 VCA and R107 VLX, for use on possible future Merseytravel contracts as well as commercial services.

An amalgamation with minibus operator Austin Passenger Services in August formed the basis of a wholly owned subsidiary, ACE Travel (Lancashire) Ltd.

Company secretary David Thomas, who provided most of this month's notes, has provided further information on heritage vehicles on permanent or extended loan. Two of his own vehicles are Leyland Lowloader prototype XTC 684, which should be in operational condition during 2006, and AEC Regent V 240 AJB, which requires a gearbox input shaft — if you are able to help, call him on 0151 524 2250 or try www.ace-travel-northwest.co.uk. Former Southport Corporation Leyland Titan PD2/Weymann open-topper CWM 154C — permanent loan from Merseytravel, is restored to full Southport red and cream livery. Former London AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H41/32R RML2723 (SMK 723F) and ex-Merseybus Leyland Atlantean/Alexander DKC 300L are also on extended loan.

Former Cass, Moreton MCW Metrobus A725 THV is out of use after accident damage and Leyland Olympian/ECW C208 GTU has yet to be used.

Alpine, Llandudno

Mercedes-Benz F916 TTP is the latest vehicle in schools yellow. GMB 392T (not 352) is not yellow and remains active on a reserve basis. HEN 867N is not yellow, but unused F916 TTP is yellow.

Open-toppers A646/54 OCX and CFM 87S are stored at Rhyl for the winter. Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW BRC 838T has gone for scrap.

Anglian, Beccles, Suffolk

Two white Alexander Dennis Enviro300s here are PO54 NNM and AU55 DYO.

AOT Travel, Rise Park, Notts

Dennis Dominator/East Lancs C113 CAT has been acquired from Fisher, Winthorpe, while Dominator/Northern Counties B214 OAJ is ex-Gospel, Eastwood.

Arriva Derby AA

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 2089/90 (N689/90 GUM) and Optare Excel 2998/9 (P315/6 FAW) are here from Arriva Midlands, for Pride Park-&-Ride service 111 based at Swadlincote. One of Derby's former Arriva Fox County Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300s was earmarked for transfer to Swadlincote to enable allocation of a heavyweight low-floor bus to its share of service 118 to Leicester.

Arriva London AA

Following the conversion of route 159 to one-person operation on 9 December, Arriva is however keeping a small heritage fleet of AEC Routemasters, expected to comprise RM5, 6 (VLT 5, 6), RM1124 (VYJ 806 *124 CLT*), RM2217 (CUV 217C), either RML888 or 901 (WLT 888, 901), RML2355 (CUV 355C) and RMC1453/64 (453/64 CLT).

Routemasters disposed of from route 38 were RML2277/80/7, 2304/15/25/8/34/44/6/56 (CUV 277C etc), RML2370/86, 2401/6/8/9/16/34/57/68/83/92, 2503/25/6/8/34/44/6/62/7/71/97 (JJD 370D etc), RML2638/55/7/88 (NML 638E etc) and RML2750 (SMK 750F), while Transport for London-owned RM652, 871 (WLT 652, 871), RM1280 (280 CLT), RM1640, 1776 (640, 776 DYE), 1941/68 (ALD 941/68B), RM2050/60 (ALM 50, 60B) have gone to First London (RM1280, 1640, 1776) and Stagecoach London (the rest) for heritage routes 9 and 15. RML2494 (CUV 294C) was auctioned in aid of Children in Need (see Millar's Tales).

The Routemasters that remained on the 159 were RM29, 54 (OYM 453A, LDS 269A; *VLT 29, 54*), RM85 (VLT 85), RM346, 548, 713 (SVS 615/8, TSK 270; *WLT 346, 548, 713*), RM838/75 (XYJ 440, OVS 940; *WLT 838/75*), RM1124/45 (VYJ 806, LDS 402A; *124/45 CLT*), RM1292, 1312 (NVS 485, MFF 509; *292, 312 CLT*), RM1975 (ALD 975B), RML892/5 (WLT 892/5), RML2264, 2307/24/33 CUV 264C etc), RML2366/75/87, 2491, 2521/45/9/72/3/7/86 (JJD 366D etc), RML2619/36 (NML 619/36E), RML2730/52/3/9 (SMK 730F etc). RML884, 2457, 2742 went to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet according to Ensign's Ross Newman, 'in bits', along with RML2315/46/56/86, 2401, 2503/26/8/67/71, 2638/55/88.

New deliveries are Mercedes Citaro G AB49T MA125-30 (BX55 FWJ-N/P) and Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 H45/19D VLA144-8 (LJ55 BTO/U/V/X/Y).

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties L519/47-9/56 (G519 VBB etc) were sold to Ensign while Volvo B10M coaches VPL3, 4, 503 (185, 205 CLT, VLT 32; *C874/6 CYX, H903 HAS*) were sold to Davian, Enfield and reverted to their original registrations. 185, 205 CLT have gone on Citaro artics MA85, 5 (BU05 VFP, BX04 MXB) while Volvo B7TL/Wright VLW32 (LJ51 DHN) is re-registered VLT 32. Dennis Dart/Alexander ALX200 ADL701 (V701 LWT) is renumbered ADL1.

LOTS reports that DAF DB250 DLA308 (Y508 UGC) caught fire after running over a double mattress, and will probably be scrapped.

More Leyland Olympians transferred to the **Original London Sightseeing Tour** are L319/24 (J319/24 BSH); LOTS also reports L329 (J329 BSH) went there in 2004, while Dennis Dominator DD202 (VVN 202Y), the last of its type at OLST, has gone to Ensign along with MCW Metrobuses MB353, 509 (GYE 353, 509W). Also withdrawn is Leaside Travel ex-East Kent AEC Regent V RV1 (GJG 750D).

Arriva Midlands AA

New Alexander Dennis Darts 2371-7 (FJ55 BWA-G), are in corporate express livery and branded Spires Link for service 825 (Stafford-Lichfield). 2378/9 (FJ55 BVT/U) are in standard bus livery for the service 2 corridor (Oswestry-Wrexham).

Ex-Arriva North West & Wales (new to Selwyn, Runcorn) DAF SB120/Wright Cadets 7683/4 (X781/3 NWX) are in interurban livery for the new Derby-Swadlincote-East Midlands Airport service.

From Arriva Derby are Scania L113CRL/East Lancs European 3492/3 (N432/3 XRC) for revised X67 (Leicester-Coventry).

Arriva North East AA

Blyth has received the last five Arriva Cymru Mercedes-Benz Varios, 2661/3/5/7/71 (R129 GNW, S353/4/1 PGA, R795 DUB), displacing Optare MetroRiders 877/81-4 (N877/81-4 RTN) to Stockton. DAF SB220s 4031-4/49 (R431-4 RPY, S349 KHN) have moved to Bishop Auckland to allow Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 1631-5 (S631-5 KHN) to transfer to Cymru, completing the swap.

Durham-based MCW Metrobuses 604/22 (KYV 646X, A973 SYF) at Durham are the only yellow schoolbuses, but also see normal service on X11 (Durham-Teesside University, Stockton). The other Metrobus at Durham, 614 (GYE 515W), is in normal livery. Volvo Olympians 7425-9 (M689-93 HPF) are among few other step-entrance

vehicles remaining at Durham. MetroRider 2612 (P612 FHN) is back in use at Darlington after accident repairs.

DAF SB120/Wright Cadet B39F 1921 (W82 PRG) was transferred to Arriva Scotland West in November.

Withdrawn are Metrobus 601 (BYX 210V), MetroRiders 876/9/85 (N876/9/85 RTN), 2604/28 (P604/28 FHN), 2706/30-2/4-6 (R706 MHN, M444-6/8/9 HPF, M452 HPG), East Lancs-rebodied Volvo B10Ms 2872/3/5 (H923/5/17 XYT), DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 4001/5 (G209/14 HCP), Leyland Lynx 2 5021 (J371 TWX), Leyland Olympian/ECW 7242/4/65/6 (A242/4 GHN, CWR 519/8Y), 7407/8 (C260/1 UAJ) and Northern Counties-bodied 7279/80/3/4 (G756/7/60/1 UYT). MetroRiders 2613/32, 2727/9 (P613/32 FHN, M441/3 HPF), Deltas 4020/90 (L420 FHN, G251 SRG), ancillary Lynx 2s 9992/3 (H339 UWT, H755 WWW) are in reserve.

Tiger 214 is with Skelton, Guisborough and Olympian 7283 with GHA, Corwen, but Olympian 7242 (A242 GHN) and Delta 4001 (G209 HCP) passed to Dixon, Annfield Plain (dealer) for scrap, where 7214/65/7, 7301 (WDC 214Y, CWR 518Y, A567 NWX, C263 XEF) were recently still intact.

Arriva North West AA

The first of 42 new VDL SB120/Wright Cadet B39F at Runcorn for service 79C to Liverpool are 2515-20/3/49 (DK55 FWZ, FXA-E/H/JS). They have green interiors like those of the new Medway and Durham fleets.

Alexander Dennis Enviro300 demonstrator SN54 VFD has been on trial at Bolton, while further ex-Blue Bus vehicles repainted in Arriva colours are Dennis Dart SLF 891 (T11 BLU), Dennis Lances 1928-30 (J108-10 WSC) and DAF SB220 2400 (R91 GNW).

Dennis Lances 1201-10/90-9 (M201-10 YKA, M930-6/27-9 EYS) have been renumbered 1901-20.

After being hit by a tree in September, Volvo B6 7205 (L205 TKA) has been replaced by Dart 1129 (N671 GUM).

Arriva Southend AA

Accident-damaged Leyland Olympian/ECW 5387 (D172 FYM) is back in service, still restricted to service 29 (Southend-Eastwood) along with 5386 (C32 CHM).

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beavers 1181-3 (R951/2/42 VPU) have gone to Arriva Midlands, but similar 1188 (R188 DNM) is to be allocated to peak-hour service 6A (Leigh Station-Eastwood), which is being re-routed and allocated a regular driver in an attempt to build custom. October service cuts led to withdrawal of 4A to Shoeburyness, 18 to Foulness Island and service 14, for which Stephenson, Rochford is providing a replacement.

Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointers 3601/3/5 (L601/3/5 EKM) are being withdrawn; 3601 (L601 EKM) has gone to the driver training school, while T603/5 (L603/5 EKM) remain in standard livery. Leyland Lynx driver trainer T047 (F47 ENF) has been used daily as a crew ferry.

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

4065 (YJ55 WSW), the first of the five new 12.4m VDL SB4000+/Van Hool Alicron C55FL accessible coaches, arrived for the Green Line 757 (Luton Airport-Victoria) in late-November, after appearing at the Busworld show (News last month). Similar 4066-9 (YJ55 WSV/X-Z) were due to enter service in mid-December.

New at Luton for services 27 and 38 are Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B44F 3601-19 (KE55 CTV/U, FBY/X, CTO/K/F, GVY/Z, GWA/C, CVG/H/J-M, GXR, CVA), which have displaced Dennis Tridents to Ware, where they replace Leyland Olympians on services 310/311. The Scanias reported last month were 3601**-4/6**.

Olympian/ECW 5841 (D203 FYM) has been cannibalised at Ware and Green Line Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Interurban 4029 (M101 CCD) is disused at Babbage Road, Stevenage. Fire-damaged Volvo B6/Northern Counties 3126 (M926 OMJ) is withdrawn.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 2147 (N377 JGS) has been withdrawn and 2138/52 (N368/82 JGS) sold, as has Iveco 59.12 2236 (N936 ETU). Also disposed of are Leyland Swift 3087 (G97 VMM), Dennis Darts 3355/75 (K405 FHJ, K762 JVX), Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount coach 4332 (H567 MPD) and Olympian 5838 (C38 CHM). Further to last month, Olympians 5854/6 (D167/9 FYM) did not go for scrap; Ensign (dealer), Purfleet sold these and 5844/55 (D211, 168 FYM) to Renown, Bexhill.

The new Cressex depot at Wycombe became fully operational in early October, replacing the Newlands bus station base.

Ausden Clark, Cossington, Leics

Another new Scania K114/InterCentury is YN05 GXY.

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

A third new 10.7m Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B37F is 355 (SN55 DVP), following 155 and 255 (SN55 DVF/G). Dennis Lance/Berkhof M966 SDP and M197 UAN have re-entered the fleet. A dealer was unable to sell them.

Banga, Wolverhampton

Optare MetroRider K422 HWY (*VIA 179, K422 HWY*) has been acquired from Horseless Carriage, Threshfield, North Yorkshire.

Also confirmed here are ex-Alder Valley Renault-Dodge S56/Northern Counties E403/10 EPE, E596 LBT *(VIA 187, E411 EPE)*, and similar ex-Ipswich E206 GPV; ex-Welcome, Gateshead S75 J553 NGS; ex-Bluebird, Middleton Iveco 49.10/Dormobile K2 BLU; ex-Welcome Optare MetroRider K168 FYG (*VIA 164, K168 FYG*); ex-Trent N223 VRC; ex-Arriva Southern Counties Mercedes-Benz 709D/Dormobile L423 CPB and Iveco 59.12/Mellor P126 YTN. However, the West Midland traffic commissioner cut the licence from 15 to seven vehicles in November.

Withdrawn are S56/Northern Counties D926 KWW, S56/Reeve Burgess E595 LBT (*E138 ATV*), S75/Plaxton J233 JJR and Iveco G936 DPH.

Above: The only one of its kind in an Arriva fleet, Arriva North West 2825 (T222 MTB) is an Alexander ALX300-bodied MAN 18.220 taken over on 31 July with the Blue Bus, Bolton business. This body/chassis combination forms part of the Stagecoach standard specification, but Blue Bus and East Yorkshire are its only other UK customers so far. MAT SOUTHART

Bath Bus Company EB

Volvo B7L/Ayats partial open-toppers 272-4 (EU05 VBG/J/K) and open toppers 372-5 (EU05 BZM, VBL/M/N) operated the City Sightseeing Bath Tour this season alongside Ayats EO04 CPV and Leyland Olympians 248, 307 (N548/37 LHG).

Bristol VRT/SL3 open-topper BCL 213T has been transferred to Ensign sales stock, while WOI 8022 and JWV 252W have gone for scrap together with MCW Metrobus A947 SUL and Mercedes-Benz 811D H647 FDE. Leyland Olympian C42 CHM has been scrapped and C48 CHM is being cannibalised. Leyland Lynx E678 DCU has gone to Shamrock, Pontypridd.

Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beavers AY55 DFZ, DGE are for the Sudbury-Halstead service. TransBus Enviro300 demonstrator SN54 HXG has been on loan.

Birmingham Coach Company

Dennis Dart/Plaxton X184 BNH is here after a spell with Green Bus, Darlington, and is joined by Optare Solo W262 EWU last reported with Truronian. More ex-Stagecoach Carlisle Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde in service are L201/2/6/9 YAG.

Birmingham Motor Traction

White rental Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart X184 BNH is here from Dawsonrentals (dealer).

Blackpool Transport

Following the repaint of DAF SB220/Optare Delta 104 (G104 NBV) into Line 6 livery, 115-8 into Line 11 livery and 101-3 (G101-3 NBV) in black/yellow pool livery, all now wear Metro Coastline schemes. The current position is: Line 6 livery (104-14), Line 11 (115-22/5-30/2/3), pool black/yellow (101-3/23) and pool grey/mustard (124); 118/25 have carried three different Coastline liveries.

All stored Leyland Atlanteans returned to service in September, 356 (A356 HHG) being an early performer on Line 10, others since appearing on Line 1 and tram-replacement 111. Ex-Fylde Track Gang Atlantean/Roe 262 (NIW 6492) is still out and about.

City Sightseeing MCW Metrobus 817 (VRG 417T) has been out of use after an accident.

Blue Triangle, Rainham

MCW Metrobus M932 (A932 SUL) and Leyland Titans T28, 1094 (WYV 28T, B94 WUV) have gone for scrap.

Brighton & Hove GA

Scania OmniDekka YN54 OBX has been on loan while resident OmniDekkas 601-18 (GX03 SVF/G/J/K, SUA/F/H/U/V/Y, SVA/C/D/E, SSU/V/Z, STZ) returned to East Lancs for alterations including removal of one lower saloon seat and their drivers' periscopes.

Brownrigg, Egremont, Cumbria

A new Mercedes-Benz Vario O814 is HB55 SHB.

Bu-Val, Smithybridge, Gtr Manchester

Acquired is Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer W984 WDS, still in the livery of previous owner Harte, Greenock.

Buzzlines, Hythe, Kent

New here are Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart/B29F GX05 AVV and Scania K124EB6/Irizar PB C48Ft YN05 WEU/V.

Below: Brighton & Hove 285 (M408 OKM), an ex-Stagecoach Dennis Lancs SLF with Berkhof body, is one of the first of the vehicles acquired with Stagecoach's Lewes-area services to be painted into fleet livery. All five of these Lances have been used to convert the Brighton park-&-ride services to low floor. RICHARD GODFREY

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
BL Blazefield Holdings
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
WG Wellglade Group
YT Traction Group

Cardiff Bus
Volvo Ailsa B55-10/Northern Counties 406 (NDW 406X) has been reinstated.

Carter, Ipswich
Dennis Dart/Northern Counties L113 HHV, new to London Northern, has come from Stagecoach Merseyside.

Castlepoint Bus Co, Bowers Gifford, Essex
Ex-London DMS-class Leyland Fleetline OJD 136R and MCW Metrobus WYW 39T are reported sold for scrap.

Central Buses, Sutton Coldfield
Optare MetroRider MRO3/B26F K267 SCN is here from Go North East.

Central Logistics, Bilston, W Midlands
Another Iveco 49.10 here is B17F-bodied P629 ROU, identical to P656 ROU already here.

Challenger, Twickenham
This new operator, part of National Car Parks, began operating London Buses services 33 (Fulwell-Hammersmith) and 419 (Richmond-Hammersmith) on 12 November using Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B28D NCP01-22 (SN55 HKD-H/J-M/O/P/T-Y, HSD/E/ HKZ, HLA/C).

Centrebus, Barrow-upon-Soar
Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Nimbus W985 WDS is transferred from the Lutonian fleet. Dart/Plaxton Pointer XIL 6082 *(K854 LGN)* has moved to Grantham from Barrow-upon-Soar.

ChesterBus
Now in ChesterBus livery are Leyland Olympian 13 (C378 CAS), Dennis Darts 51-4/8, 60 (J51-4 EDM, K58 LLG, L160 PDM) and Marshall Minibus 247 (P407 KAV). Leyland Fleetline 79 (BCB 613V) has been returned to service — a rarity these days in being a Fleetline with a major original operator of the type.

Choice, Willenhall
Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs Spryte R524 YRP is in use. Ex-D&G Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart SLF/Plaxton 101 is confirmed registered GNZ 3462 *(V265 BNV)*.

City Sightseeing EB
Deroofed ex-Reading Buses DAF DB250/Optare Spectra K703 BBL is to join this fleet as a permanent open-topper. Also expected are ex-Travel West Midlands Scania N113DRB/Alexander H234/43 LOM.

MCW Metrobus DTG 371V returned from Copenhagen, has been refurbished and sent despatched abroad again to San Diego. However, Metrobus EWF 455V has been scrapped, 227, 317/8/22/30 were withdrawn at the end of the season and many more are to go in the coming months. Leyland Titan CUL 167V has gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Former Mac Tours Leyland Titan PD2/47/East Lancs JTF 218F has returned to East Lancs for preservation and display, but remains owned by Ensign.

Classic, Annfield Plain TGM
Former OK Travel Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 8408 (L408 GDC) has passed to Jeffs, Helmdon.

Coastal Liner, Wolverhampton
Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 3200 Express A118 EPA was destroyed at the Demolition Derby at Hednesford Raceway on 29 August.

Cook, Wellington, Somerset
The Optare Solo fleet has doubled with the arrival of 10 bought new since August. Four SlimLine Solos in Cook's Coaches livery for Devon and Somerset contracted routes are M780/B24F YK05 CAY and M850/B27F YK05 CAV/X, CBF. Six Solo M990/B37F are for the new Taunton Park-&-Ride are Cook's-liveried YJ55 BHL and YJ55 BHN-P/U/V in yellow/magenta Park-&-Ride livery.

County Rider, Lewes
As County Rider fleetnames are carried by vehicles owned by East Coast Sussex County Council, future notes will be shown under this heading. The Optare Solo is standard vehicle here and latest to enter service are SlimLines M850SL/B25F YJ05 CDV, WCA/C-G in allover dark blue, similar to Eastbourne's. They join Solos S794 XUG, V931-5 VUB, X657 WYG, YG52 DHD, YV03 UTX/Y and YN53 ELU.

Courtney, Bracknell
New is Optare Solo/B33F RX55 AOT. Other Solos in the fleet are W289 EYG, Y811/2 KDP, YG52 DHJ/K, YE52 FGX, FHD, KPP/R/T/U, CL52 CCL, KX53 SBY/Z, SCV/Z, SDO, KX04 HRA, NLC/D, YJ54 UXA and YJ05 XMT, XNA in use, most of which have not been previously reported— thanks to Bill Potter for these notes.

Cresswell, Moira, Leicestershire
Former Travel West Midlands Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 P260 RUM is acquired.

CT Plus
Formerly known as Hackney Community Transport, this undertaking has acquired Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Compass B30D HDC13 (T431 LGP) from East Thames Buses.

D&G, Adderley Green, Staffs
Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright NimBus 28 (G541 TBD) is transferred from Choice Travel and the previous 28 (CNZ 2250) with Wadham Stringer bodywork sold. Another 709D acquired is 78 (L37 OKV) from Lloyd, Bagillt.

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton KV51 KZD/F have been on loan.

Davian, Enfield
Acquisitions from Arriva London are Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C53F C874/6 CYX (*185, 205 CLT, C874/6 CYX*) and C49Ft-seated H903 HAS (*VLT 32, H903 HAS*).

Doyle, Alfreton
Rental Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar P17 FUG, last used by GHA, Corwen, is on loan from Stafford Bus Centre (dealer), Cotes Heath.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham
Further ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus DR102s acquired from Stafford Bus Centre for Lincoln are F48, 59, 79, 81, 104, 304/6/10 XOF, F992/3 XOE. Metrobus LOA 369X and ex-Nottingham Scania N112 DRB/East Lancs E200 WHS have come out of storage and are at Lincoln along with Metrobus GOG 127W, Mercedes-Benz 811D/Autobus N67 MDW, rebodied Volvo B10M/East Lancs WJI 9362 (*TOS 757X*), ex-London Mercedes 811D/Optare StarRider MIL 8325 (*F181 FWY*) from Nottingham.

Lincoln-based Leyland Nationals UFX 849S, VFX 985S, ACH 504T and UPT 671V have been scrapped. National EPT 879S was acquired by Need A Bus, Nottingham in September.

Ex-Nottingham Volvo B10M/East Lancs B306 KVO and Volvo B7TLs FE51 RCY/Z are repainted in Dunn-Line bus livery at Nottingham. Metrobuses BOK 83V and A690 UOE are overall adverts for Egg credit card. F48 XOF was the last Lincoln Metrobus repainted, Dennis Dart K586 MGT and Optare MetroRider having also lost MASS Transit colours in favour of fleet livery.

Volvo B12B/Van Hool YJ03 GXW/Z are still on fleet strength, along with KSK 932 and G533 LWU, Metrobus C414 BUV and B10M GIL 8469 remaining licensed.

Accident-damaged Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur W383 PRC is withdrawn at Nottingham. Ex-Travel West Midlands Leyland Lynx G281 EOG was acquired by Kearns, Birr, Co Offally, in August.

Eastbourne Buses
County Rider Optare Solo SlimLine M850SL/B23F 517 (YJ05 WCG) is on loan from East Sussex County Council (its B460) for service 6 while regular Solo 301 (YJ05 WCC) is away at Optare.

East Thames Buses
Ash Grove garage closed on 14 October, and operations moved to Mandela Way, off the Old Kent Road.

Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Compass B30D DC8 (T431 LGP) has gone to Hackney Community Transport (CT Plus) and 11 similar buses are being converted to single door for Go North East.

East Yorkshire EY
Mercedes-Benz Citaro demonstrator BX05 UWG was used on park-&-ride with temporary fleetnumber 109.

The Bedford OB, 100 (KSU 381), has reverted to its original registration, SS 7376. Also reverting to original registrations are Volvo B10M coaches 89, 90, 364 (794 EYD, 665 EYL, 1918 KH; *L630 PSF, P555 GSM, M869 NRH*).

Volvo B10M/Alexander PS 218/23 (M418/23 RRN) and Mercedes-Benz Varios 452/3 (R452/3 PRH) have gone to Whittle, but PSs 224/5 (M424/5 RRN) have returned here.

Embling, Guyhirn, Cambs
Bristol VRT/SL3s DNG 233T, PAG 515W, MWG 941X and WKH 526X all came from Moxon, Oldcotes, but WAX 239S was not acquired.

Express Motors, Penygroes
All-white MAN 14.220/East Lancs B38F CX55 EMS, operated on service 1 (Bangor-Blaenau Ffestiniog), has been repainted into yellow/white fleet livery. Dennis Dart SLF S1 EMS was re-registered S496 MCC from a Mercedes-Benz before sale to North Birmingham Busways, enabling its cherished S1 EMS mark to be retained.

Finch, Higher Ince
Ex-Crosville Leyland Olympian/ECW B189 BLG is smartly presented in red/cream livery here, complete with front wheelnut rings.

First FG
More ex-London Central Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties double-deckers acquired through Ensign (dealer), Purfleet to reduce the average age of the fleet are H48/27D-seated N536/47 LHG, H47/27D-seated R277 RGH, P908/20/1/6/30 RYO and CH47/26D-seated R241, 346 LGH, which have become 31841/6 at First Somerset & Avon.

First Bristol FG
Delivery of new Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini H45/29F 37001-20 (WX55 VHK-P/R/T-W/Y/Z, VJA/C-G/J) for service 75 (Hartcliffe-Cribbs Causeway) began in November. The last of the ex-London Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H43/27F, 34044 (P244 UCW) is in service. 34006-10 are ex-London Central, 34041-52 ex-First London.

First Coaches FG
Unusual transfers from First Wyvern are Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B22F 52553/4 (S553/4 RWP) for school contracts.

First Cymru FG
The 21 new Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile C45FL are allocated to Ravenhill (20358-63 with 20373 as a float) and Port Talbot (20354-7/64-72 confirmed). 20369/71-3 were delivered as CU05 LHG/H/J/K and 20367/70 have Excel branding. 20369/71/3 became CV55 AMU/X/P. The last delivered was 20374 (CU05 LHL). 20369/71/2 carry Excel X1 branding, 20355/7/64/5/8 Excel X2, 20354/6/66/7/79 Excel Express and 20358-63 Shuttle 100.

Dennis Javelin GX 12SDA/Plaxton Expressliner 2 C49Ft 62377 (N471 KHU, *A12 SMT, N471 KHU*) has come from First Edinburgh, and similar C44Ft-seated 21133 (N233 WFJ) from First Devon & Cornwall. Three X-registered Expressliners are due from First Coaches to free up three older coaches (two manual and one automatic) for the training fleet.

Mercedes 709D 51227 remains branded for Gower service 16C, which First Cymru ceased to operate over a year ago.

Following retirement of Leyland Olympian 34803 (C903 FCY), just one vehicle — Mercedes-Benz O814D 50538 (F338 FCY) at Haverfordwest — remained in SWT green and only four double-deckers remained operational, Olympians 34349-51 (J149-51 YRM) at Pontardawe and 34804 (C904 FCY) at South East Wales (the collective name for Port Talbot, Maesteg and Bridgend depots).

Also withdrawn are Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45403 (JDZ 5103) and Plaxton-bodied 46566 (JDZ 5193) ex-reserve, Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 22026 (F726 UNE) and unused Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Expressliner 2 62376 (N321 NHY).

Tiger 22026 (F726 ENE), Olympian 34802 (C902 FCY), Dart/Wright 45303/8/10/80 (JDZ 2303 etc) and Mercedes-Benz 814D 50526 (F326 DCY) have been struck off stock.

First Devon & Cornwall FG
Another Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Alexander H47/26D from First Aberdeen is 31535 (A106 FSA).

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C44Ft 20438 (M413 DEU) has been transferred to First Edinburgh, Dennis Javelin

Above: First Devon & Cornwall 32762 (WJ55 CRZ), from the latest delivery of East Lancs Myllennium-bodied Dennis Tridents, in Truro with the current style of corporate branding for services 89/90 between Falmouth and Newquay. STEVE RICE

GX/Plaxton Expressliner 2 C44Ft 21133 (N233 WFJ) to First Cymru and Scania L94IB/Irizar Intercentury C55F 23126 (P26 RFS) to the First Manchester rail replacement fleet.

Volvo B10M-55/Plaxton Derwent II 66552 (G452 JYG) has gone to South Molton Metals (dealer) for scrap.

First Eastern Counties FG

Dennis Dominators 30010-2/6 (F140-2 MBC, F292 PTP) went to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap during November. Mercedes-Benz minibuses 51247/56 (L647/56 MEV), 51384 (M384 KVR) have been exported to Northern Cyprus.

Only two outstations remain — Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket. The garage building at Bury is used for fuelling and maintenance again and is shared with Burton's.

First Essex FG

Plaxton Primo demonstrator YX55 DSE was evaluated at Harwich during October.

Mercedes-Benz 711D/Plaxton 51802 (P402 HPU) has been withdrawn, but 51809 (P409 HPU) is back in use at Basildon. 709D/Plaxton 51458/66/8/9/71 (M658, 166, 668/9/71 VJN) are now in Northern Cyprus with local registration marks HG 398/7/9, 403/2. They have been joined by 51474 (M674 VJN), and from elsewhere in First, 50091 (N575 CEH), 51247/56/99 (L647/56 MEV, M239 VYA), 51384 (M384 KVR), 51566/82 (M866 ATC, N882 HWS), 51628 (N628 GAH).

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

An additional dual-door ex-London Central Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties is as yet unnumbered R278 LGH in First livery. Mercedes-Benz minibuses 51299, 51566/82 (M239 VYA, M866 ATC, N882 HWS) have gone to Northern Cyprus.

First Leicester FG

Two of the unregistered fire-damaged BMC schoolbuses have departed, as have more stored Leyland Lynxes. Leyland Tiger formerly 20 (A351 RUM, *A420 GBC*) has gone to Harare, Zimbabwe via a Bristol dealership.

First London FG

Transport for London has allocated Marshall-refurbished AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H36/28R RM1204/18/80, 1562 (204 CLT etc), RM1627/40, 1776 (627 DYE etc) and RM1913 (ALD 913B) here for the daily (09.30-18.30) heritage short workings on route 9 (Aldwych-Royal Albert Hall). RM1562 was a one-off conversion in 2002 by Cummins with an electronically controlled ISCe engine and four-speed transmission. RM1204/18, 1562, 1627, 1735 and 1913 came from London Sovereign, RM1280, 1640, 1776 from Arriva London North.

RM1650 is being retained indefinitely, still in 1977 Silver Jubilee livery.

More Volvo Olympians sent to Rotherham are VDN34206/9/10 (S206/9/10 LLO).

First Manchester FG

Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban 66888 (MX55 NWF) was only at Bolton for familiarisation before the arrival of the main batch there, and returned to Oldham in October. 66894 (MX55 FFD) is another route branded for the 575.

More Dennis Arrows at Ince schoolbus depot are Northern Counties H49/33F-bodied 30579/80/2/4, 31904 (P401/7/9/11/04 PLE) from First West Yorkshire and East Lancs H49/27D-bodied 31938 (R438 ULE) from First Somerset & Avon, displacing Scania N113DRB/East Lancs 30249-51/3 (G801-3/5 JRH) to West Yorkshire. Besides schools services, Ince has picked up odd bits of service work on Saturdays, including Saturdays-only 132 (Wigan-Trafford Centre) and 300 (Bolton-Trafford Centre) and workings on 22 (Bolton-Eccles-Trafford Centre-Stockport).

Scania L94IB/Irizar Intercentury C55F 23126 (P26 RFS) has arrived from First Devon & Cornwall for the rail replacement fleet run on the CentreWest operator licence.

Mercedes-Benz Citaros 60224-9/32/5-7/9-41/5/6/52/3/5-8/61/5/79 have been reseated to B41F, ex-B38F.

Scania L94UB/Wright Axcess Floline 61142 (S360 MFP) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 2s 40367/75/9/83 (R241/9/53/7 SBA) have gone to First Potteries, while rail replacement L94UB/Wright Solar 61226 (YM52 UWB) has gone to First Edinburgh and Volvo B10L/Wright Liberators 60350-2 (N557-9 BNF) are with First Glasgow.

The last ex-Greater Manchester Buses Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties left in service is 30202 (F279 DRJ) at Dukinfield, though it has also been reported in service at Oldham, presumably on loan. 30201/4/5 (F278/81/4 DRJ) are in reserve at Oldham, while 30146/50/2/6/61/3/79/83/4/91/2 (C177/89/92 YBA, C203/17/9 CBU, C247/51/2 FRJ, D262/3 JVR) await disposal. First Manchester has donated Olympians 30120/54/64 (B101 SJA, C201/25 CBU) and rare Northern Counties-bodied MCW Metrobuses 30285/95 (D302 JVR, D312 LNB) to the Selnec Preservation Society. Olympian 30214 is registered F303 DRJ (Fleet News, November).

Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 40664 (M615 SBA) is withdrawn.

First Northampton FG

By September, ex-First Manchester Volvo B10Ls 60355/7/9 (N301/3/5 WNF) were out of use, along with 61146 (N43 RRP), all of which only managed a few weeks' service. Another, unidentified B10L out of service may be 61142 (N41 RRP). The last Volvo B6/Northern Counties, 48026 (L6 GML), is also out of service.

The last loaned vehicle from First Leicester, Volvo B7L 66302 (KV02 VVD), has returned there. Alexander Dennis Tridents 33401-5 (VX54 NTV/Y/Z, MUA/B) have at last made their way to First Wyvern.

First Potteries FG

Scania L94UB/Wright Axcess Floline B40F 61142 (S360 MFP) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 2 B37F 40367/75/9/83 (R241/9/53/7 SBA) have been transferred from First Manchester.

DAF SB220/Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220s 60022/6 (J423 NCP, K527 RJX) have been transferred from Chester to Newcastle-under-Lyme, but have yet to enter service.

PVS, Carlton (dealer) has taken Optare MetroRider 40048 (M381 SRE) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton 40095 (K928 XRF).

First Somerset & Avon FG

The next batch of Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F is 66934-61 (WX55 UAA-D, TVZ, TZA-H/J-P/R-T), of which 66934-6 are at Wells and 66937-48 at Bath.

More secondhand Volvo Olympians have arrived. Northern Counties DPH47/26D 31841/6 (R241, 346 LGH) are ex-London Central, while Alexander Royale CH45/27F-bodied 34108 (W435 CWX) is ex-Yorkshire Coastliner.

Dennis Arrow/East Lancs 31938 (R438 ULE) has joined others at First Manchester.

More Leyland Lynxes withdrawn from Weston are 62609/12/26 (F609 RTC etc). Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 51002/92 (L802 SAE, L892 VHT), 51575/7/8/80 (N875/7/8/80 HWS) have been sold to Munden (dealer), Bristol. Leyland Olympian 34532 (LWS 43Y) has gone for scrap.

First South Yorkshire FG

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34053/4 (P253/4 UCW) are in service at Olive Grove and Leyland Lynx 2 LX2R11C15Z4R 62740 (G140 HNP) is a driver trainer at Rotherham.

Doncaster-based dual-door Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34104 (T904 KLF) has had its exit doors barred by a rail.

Advertising has been applied to the floors of some vehicles to warn passengers about First's £35 penalty fare.

Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-types 60469/70/5-7, earmarked to go to Poland as driver trainers but never sent there, have been equipped with LED electronic destination displays for their return to service, but accident-damaged 60544 (J702 AWF) is to be sold. Volvo B6BLE/Wright Crusader 40496 (T459 JDT) has suffered rear-end damage from an engine fire.

Reserve Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton 50190 (R123 XDT) has been on loan to First West Yorkshire as a route trainer, but 50197 (R130 XDT) has been withdrawn and 50203 (R136 XDT) is to be sold. Dennis Dominator driver trainer 30481 (B448 CKW) has been withdrawn for disposal and PVS, Carlton (dealer) has taken redundant Dominator 30509 (D482 OWE).

First West Yorkshire FG

TDI/B30F battery-powered minibus VO52 AFA, resembling a tram, ran on trial around Bradford from 3 October until 12 November.

Ex-London United Volvo Olympian/Alexander H47/25D 31811-6 (XDZ 5911-6, R918 WOE) have entered service at Kirkstall. Like other ex-London Olympians in Leeds, their centre exit doors remain operational, but use is at drivers' discretion.

continued overleaf...

Below: First has transferred five of these East Lancs-bodied Scania N113DRBs, new 16 years ago to Kingston-upon-Hull City Transport, from its Manchester schoolbus unit to West Yorkshire. 30252 (G804 JRH), which arrived ahead of the other four, entered service in schoolbus yellow, but at least one of the others is in corporate Barbie livery. DANIEL STAZICKER

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

BL Blazefield Holdings

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

WG Wellglade Group

YT Traction Group

Further Scania N113DRB/East Lancs H57/37F from First Manchester are 30249-51/3 (G801-3/5 JRH); they were new to Kingston-upon-Hull City Transport. 30252, at Bramley, was first into service still in yellow, but 30253 has been repainted into Barbie livery for ordinary service. More Dennis Arrows sent in exchange Ince are 30579/80/2/4, 31904 (P401/7/9/11/04 PLE), leaving only 30585, 31902/3/5/6 (P412/02/3/5/6 PLE) in use.

Former Black Prince Scanias repainted in Barbie livery include double-deckers 36922/8/9 (F422/8/9 GWG) and solitary single-decker 64818 (P818 AWT), while 36924 (F424 GWG), an overall advertisement for Anchor Light Spread, has had its front repainted into Barbie livery. 36928 — which carried a 35th anniversary livery — was the last double-decker in Black Prince red/yellow.

Leyland Olympians 30633/4 (B126/7 RWY), Dennis Dart 40089 (K922 XRF), Optare Solo 50319 (YN53 ELJ) and Dennis Lance 60953 (M415 VWW) are all in schoolbus yellow, along with BMC 1100FEs 68501/15-7/20/1/3-30/40-8.

Driver training Olympians 30590/8, 30601 (JHU 901X, CUB 33/7Y) and Lynxes 61236, 62629 (F102 GRM, F629 RTC) all wear FirstGroup training livery. Ex-First Thamesway Leyland-engined Lynx trainer 1432 (D876 ELL) has finally been numbered 62476, and Cummins-engined 1407 (F407 LTW) is 62507.

Leyland Olympian/Roe 30619 (A106 KUM) has passed to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Former Rollinson Safeway, Armley Mercedes-Benz 711D/Leicester Carriage Builders 50399 (N480 RNR) has been withdrawn from the Access fleet at Bramley, replaced by rental Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413CDi/UVG B14FL Y334 PNW from Norflex Fleet Hire, Rotherham.

First Wyvern FG

Alexander Dennis Tridents 33401-5 (VX54 NTV/Y/Z, MUA/B) have arrived at last after a long stint on loan to Northampton, awaiting tree lopping to take place; 33401/3/5 are at Redditch, 33402 at Evesham and 33404 at Kidderminster.

Leyland Lynx 62714 (G114 HNP) has been noted in use as a driver trainer, rebuilt with rounded wheelarches, while 62711 (G111 HNP) has become a trainer with First Edinburgh.

Mercedes-Benz Varios 52553/4 (S553/4 RWP) have gone to First Coaches. All Mercedes 709Ds have been withdrawn; 51264-70/5/6 (N264 JUG) and 811D 51636 (N526 REW) went into store at Leicester.

First York FG

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B41F 60801 (R234 JYG) has been on loan from First West Yorkshire (Bradford).

Geldard, Leeds

Yellow BMC 1100FE/B55F schoolbuses YK05 BAV, BBE/F are in use, identical to those operated by FirstGroup. MCW Metrobus MkII E750 SKR is numbered 311.

GHA Coaches, Corwen

A new 8.5m Optare Solo SlimLine/B28F in red/silver low-floor livery is AA55 GHA. Also acquired is ex-Arriva Northumbria Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H43/32F G760 UYT. Meanwhile a short (10.5m) Optare Tempo demonstrator, YJ05 JWZ, has been evaluated and two Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profiles are on order.

Acquired accident damaged Mercedes-Benz Vario W608 XBA is in stock, a decision pending on cannibalisation or use. Refurbished ex-Stagecoach Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS K772 DAO is in service, as is Leyland Olympian K130 DAO, with K129 DAO next into the workshops.

Above: A surprise addition to the Harrogate & District fleet is East Lancs-bodied Volvo B10M 426 (K26 WBV), new to Burnley & Pendle in municipal days. It replaces one of the company's last Dennis Javelin coaches and wears Blazefield's primrose schoolbus livery. DANIEL STAZICKER

Olympian/ECW A320 YWJ has been cannibalised, and Bristol VRT/SL3 VEX 299X rests alongside it after engine failure. Olympian A511 EJF is earmarked for the Stafford Bus Centre (dealer).

Godson, Leeds

BMC 1100FE/B55F schoolbuses YK05 BAA/U, BBA are at work in the Garforth area.

Go North East GA

The six DAF SB220GS/Plaxton Prestige B42F are 4983-8 (R971/2/5/9/82/3 FNW). They are in service at Stanley on services X30/X31 and 709/728. 4983-5/7/8 were previously at Edinburgh Airport, while 4986 was with Airlinks,

Eleven two-door Caetano Compass-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs new to Limebourne and latterly with East Thames Buses are to be acquired, after conversion to single-door by Caetano at Waterlooville.

A further ex-Arriva London Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H47/31F from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) is 3953 (G522 VBB). Olympian/ECW 9046 (C46 CHM) has returned to Ensign. Former Isle of Man Transport and Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian/Alexander 3947/8 are H481/**5** PVW (*90 D 1024/7*) and withdrawn DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4750 is G75**5** UCU. Hired Olympian ONLXB/1R/Roe H47/29F UWW 6X, still in Eastbourne Buses livery, was last with Ace Travel, Aintree and is numbered 9006.

Leyland Olympian/ECW 3737 (B737 GCN) has gone to Classic, Annfield Plain. Optare MetroRider 427 (P427 VRG), Volvo B6 8407 (L407 GDC) and the sole surviving member of the former Diamond fleet, Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 8116 (L315 XBB), have been sold to Ensign. However, Dart 8115 (M815 HCU) has been reinstated at Chester-le-Street.

Green Bus, Great Wyrley, Staffs

Ex-Stagecoach Bluebird Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver K321 YKG is here numbered 14.

Guide Friday EB

Leyland Fleetlines UKV 482R and UTV 215S have gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer) along with Leyland Atlanteans PCR 307M and GTO 334N. Leyland Atlantean GRC 890N has gone to Chris Hunn, Norwich for preservation and GFS 448N to Imperial Buses, Rainham for use and preservation.

Halifax Bus Company

Ford Transit/Crystal B20F TJ7 (TJI 9147, *M377 ELA*) has ousted Carlyle-bodied TJ7 (TJI 9147, *C63 LHL*). A recent acquisition is Mercedes-Benz P673 LHE, in red but without a fleetnumber.

Ex-North Cotswold, Mickleton LDV Convoy/UVG R812 UOK has been numbered TJ10 and replaces Transit TJ10 (B10 TJW, *H657 XUM*). Transit TJ11 (B11 TJW) has been re-registered E690 WKJ and withdrawn, B11 TJW passing to TJ25 (G299 PKN).

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander N168 WNF is TJ21 and 811D/Plaxton N571 OUH is TJ22. TJ24 (N704 FSM) has been re-registered B16 TJW. Ex-Trinity, Clitheroe Transit/UVG M307 TFR is TJ26 and Iveco/Leicester Carriage Builders B19F P628 ROU from London Borough of Wandsworth is TJ27.

Harrogate & District BL

A surprise acquisition is ex-Lancashire United Volvo B10M-50/East Lancs B45F 426 (K26 WBV), new to Burnley & Pendle, as a replacement for coach-seated Dennis Javelin 141 (L141 BFV), sold to Rapsons. Eclipse driver trainer 162 (L101 SDY), the last Javelin in the fleet, is expected to follow it to Scotland (see below).

Also acquired are the remaining Burnley & Pendle Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President DPH43/28F due here, 2702/6/7 (Y702 HRN etc), allowing Volvo Olympians/Northern Counties 2954/6/9 (S54 VNM etc) to go to Keighley & District. 2702/4/8 went to S&T, Blackburn for repainting.

The Autumn Flower Show brought short-term loans of stored ex-Sovereign B10M/Plaxton C53F 301/17/8 (KE51 WUO, P317/8 RGS) from Burnley, Mini Pointer Darts 701/2 (W701/2 BFV) and Leyland Olympian/Alexander 901-4 (L648-51 MYG). Most unusually, additional vehicles hired in from Dodsworth, Boroughbridge with drivers were Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C53F W747 DDN, B10M-62/Jonckheere C53F Y752 XDN, Setra S315GT-HD/C48Ft BD02 HDE, S415HD/C48Ft GB03 JDC and Volvo B12B/Plaxton C49Ft GB04 JDC.

Hedingham Omnibuses

Leyland Leopards L115/21 (FEV 115Y, DBH 452X) passed to Rallybeam, Debach and Framlingham and not Norfolk Green as reported in November Fleet News. Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Supremes L268-70 (XGS 767X, GVS 948Y, CPU 125X) have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, L269 passing to Southern Transit, Brighton.

Hilton, Newton-le-Willows

Mercedes Vario O814D/Optare Nouvelle SR C33F FY52 GOP is in stock from Hoban, Workington. The Ward Dalesman reported with Bennett's was here for over a month but is moving on. A288 TSN is a Volvo Citybus B10M-50 Citybus, not an Ailsa.

Holmes, Clay Cross, Derbyshire

Three new Optare Solos should are due here and Mercedes-Benz J639 OPF has been sold.

Left: GHA Coaches has begun using its ex-Stagecoach North West vehicles written off after Carlisle depot was flooded last January. Alexander-bodied long wheelbase Leyland Olympian F811 FAO is in a school transport livery. TONY HALL

Hornsby, Ashby, Lincs
Another Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 is X764 OBA (*H1 JYM*) from Stones, Leigh.

HTL, Huyton
MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta P445 SWX is in stock from Liverpool City Coaches, and is in green fleet livery.

Hulme Hall, Cheadle Hulme
Volvo B6/Alexander Dash L423 XVV has been acquired from Stagecoach Merseyside, but was new to United Counties.

Hunt, Alford, Lincs
Former Trent Barton Optare Excel 2 V198 DRC has been acquired.

Hutchinson, Thorpe Bay, Essex
Arriva-liveried MCW Metrobus GBU 5V has been sold to SBC Engineering, Leigh-on-Sea (dealer). This vehicle — for much of its time showing a registration GBU5 V (looking like GBUS V) — has confused local Arriva passengers for some years.

Ipswich Buses
Scania OmniCity demonstrator YN55 RCY was in use in late-November/early-December, numbered 500.

Islwyn Borough Transport
Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver 10 (N572 OUH) is in Tesco livery for a free service to the new store at Pontypool. Uncommon Mercedes-Benz 609D/North West Coach Sales C24F 89 (SIL 4467, *F46 GNS*) has passed to Newton, Newbridge, still in Kingfisher livery.

Leyland Leopard/Marshall 27 (YDW 566T) has passed out of preservation to the WAWWA (We Are What We Are) Musical Theatre Company, Newport.

JB, Watnall, Nottinghamshire
Leyland Titan/Park Royal WYV 53T has been acquired from Kinchbus for a Kirkby-in-Ashfield schools contract.

Johnson, Hodthorpe, Notts
A famous East Midlands vehicle acquired from Road Car is former Gash, Newark 1949 Daimler CVD6 DD1 (KAL 578). It has a 1962 Massey double-deck body.

Scania K124 YN05 HBB has an Irizar PB C49Ft body, not a Century as reported in November Fleet News.

Above: As reported last month, Hornsby of Ashby has acquired this former Dublin Bus Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Leyland Olympian, which latterly was with Isle of Man Transport. H479 PVW, photographed in Scunthorpe bus station, was Dublin Bus RH18 and IoMT 18. NIGEL BLAIR

Keighley & District BL
Transfers from Harrogate & District are Volvo Olympian YV3YNA/Northern Counties H43/29F 954/6/9 (S56 VNM etc) and the second Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President DPH43/28F from Burnley & Pendle is 2701 (Y701 HRN). 959 carries fleet livery rather than schoolbus yellow, but 954 is going yellow as are 953/6/7, with 958 also expected in fleet colours.

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts 701/2 (W701/2 BFV) have gone to Burnley & Pendle, but MPDs 779/81 (X579/81 MBH) are expected to remain here.

Leyland Olympians 901-4 (L647-51 MYG), the last Alexander-bodied double-deckers in stock, have gone to Road Car.

Kent County Council
New are Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile DP70FL PS513 (YN05 XZP) and DP70F PS514-6 (YN05 XZR-T). Five more are on order, PS517 to be DP70F, PS518-21as DP70FL.

Kingsman, Faversham
Rare Bristol LHL6L/Plaxton Supreme FKX 279T, previously with PPH, St Albans, has been acquired.

KJB, North Hykeham, Lincs
Former Cardiff Leyland Olympian/East Lancs RBO 507Y and A513 VKG have come from Fairbrother, Warrington, following extensive retendering of schools services in North Kesteven.

K-Line, Honley, W Yorks
All-white Optare Solo M850/B28F MX55 BYK is here and is to don Metro Connect livery.

Konectbus, Dereham, Norfolk
Another B45F Optare Excel L1150 due from Trent Barton is 205 (V205 ENU).

Leven Valley, Middlesbrough
Recently acquired Optare Solo M880s 27/8 (T27/8 BXG), *Astraea* and *Avalon* break a six-year standardisation on Mercedes-Benz buses. Withdrawn are ex-Dublin Bus Mercedes-Benz 811D/Leicester Carriage Builders 78-80 (M478/9 YSG, N645 HSX), of which 78, *St Patrick*, has gone to Hutchinson, Easingwold, 79 *St Aidan* to Robinson, South Shields and 80 *St Brendan* to Speedwell, Glossop.

HALFCABS ETCETERA
JOHN G.LIDSTONE's quarterly update on older British buses at home and abroad

AEC Regent
Former **Morecambe & Heysham** Park Royal-bodied **Regent III** KTF 591 is alive and well, enjoying its 20th year or so in South Yorkshire. It was recently repainted into pseudo-London Transport red/cream as RT591 and is owned by Barrels and Bottles of Sheffield.

AEC Routemaster
Former First London **RML2559** (JJD 559D) was noted recently at Sheffield railway station, owned by Harrogate New Life Church and adorned for Operation Christmas Child. **RML2329, 2664** (CUV 329C, SMK 664F) are with Ambassatours of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. **RML2654** (NML 654E) is with Acmas Trucks of Sofia, Bulgaria.

Albion
The one-off Reading-bodied **Nimbus** for **The Greys, Guernsey**, 1309, is registered 210 UXO in preservation in the UK. It is being returned from Guernseybus white to traditional Watson's Greys light grey with black roof and window surrounds. In Guernsey Railway ownership, its Albion engine was replaced by a Bedford six-cylinder unit — making it a very fast and (in many respects) ideal vehicle, but completely destroying its Albion character, as well as its appearance, with a front-mounted radiator.

Bristol
Further to last month's news report about ex-**Eastern National KSW5G** WNO 480, Bob Hodges has been in touch about WNO 481 *(pictured right)*, which he photographed near La Caleta, Tenerife in July 2000. It advertised something called Wings over Europe and was parked in a fenced compound. It had gone from the site when he returned two years later. The 1000th Lodekka built, **Eastern National LD5G** 297 JHK, has surfaced in the United States and is described as 'reasonably intact'.

Crossley
Ex-Reading **DD42/8** 89 (ERD 158) has recently been auctioned. It was stripped of its body on withdrawal in 1967, has a lorry cab and has been used as a traction engine transporter for many years.

Leyland Titan
Former **Southend Transport** Massey-bodied **PD3/6** open-topper 311 (PHJ 950) moved to Berlin in October for sightseeing work during 2006, after a period languishing for sale after use by Christina Rduch in Hamburg, also on sightseeing. In the 1990s, it saw daily use in Hamburg, but left-hand-drive ex-Berlin MANs took over that role and latterly it was used only for special events and charters.

Former **Salford City Transport** 1966 **PD2/40**/Metro-Cammell H36/28F FRJ 243D is in use under the Trotters Ethnic Tours, Peckham title as a mobile museum of *Only Fools and Horses* memorabilia.

Leyland National
Isle of Man Road Services 1976-built 24 (MAN 24H) remains in use at Ronaldsway Airport as an airside vehicle. It is owned by the Manx Transport Museum Group at Peel and has recently been repainted red. A Herefordshire preservationist has bought former **Midland Red North** 702 (TOF 702S).

P&O Ferries has donated former **London Country** early Leyland LN45 (NPD 145L) to the Dover Transport Museum. It has been converted into a hospitality vehicle and the museum plans to tour local schools with displays about this and other museums in East Kent.

St John Ambulance, Marlow, Bucks has former **London Transport** LS230 (THX 230S).

GROUP CODES
AA Arriva Passenger Services
BL Blazefield Holdings
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
WG Wellglade Group
YT Traction Group

Limburg Touring, Sheffield

Further to last month, OUI 6275 is recently acquired Leyland Olympian/ECW JTY 372X. GRH 3Y is OUI 6276, but JTY 401X is OUI 6272. Olympian USU 638 was re-registered HTU 633X and then OUI 6433; Van Hool coach C434 RJR has become USU 638.

London Central/London General GA

The commercial unit has retained AEC Routemasters RM9 (VLT 9) and RML887 (215 UXJ), RML2283 (WLT 516, *CUV 283C*), RML2305 (CUV 305C), RML2593 (JJD 593D), RML2604 (NML 604E) and RML2725 (SMK 725F). RML2283 has the platform doors from scrapped DRM2516 (WLT 516, *JJD 516D*) and has been renumbered DRM2516. DRM2516 was renumbered RML2283 'on paper' and was scrapped as such. RML2339 (CUV 339C) has donated its Cummins B-series engine/gearbox to formerly Scania-engined RM9 to meet emission requirements.

RML2314/8 (CUV 314/8C), RML2472, 2507/20/78 (JJD 472D etc) and pink RML2673 (SMK 673F), held back from sale as spares for the commercial fleet, have been released to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) for disposal, along with RML894, 2339, 2593.

Ensign has sold Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties NV36, 47, 77, 108/20/1/6/30/46 (N536/47 LHG, R277 RGH, P908/20/1/6/30 RYO, R346 LGH) to First. NV6-10 (N306-10 JBV) are also in service with First Bristol.

London United/London Sovereign TD

The Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs for the 13 are H45/27D SLE21-42 (YN55 NHT-V/X-Z, NJE/F/J/K/U/V, NKA/C-H/J-L), while the first delivered for the 27 are H45/26D SLE43-6 (YN55 NKM/O/P/R).

AEC Routemasters taken out of service after crew operation ended on 21 October were RM23, 45, 121/80/91 (JFO 256, AST 415A, SSL 806, XVS 830, AST 416A; *VLT 23 etc*), RM324 (WLT 324), RM329, 441, 659, 931 (MFF 578, LDS 341A, KFF 239, MFF 580; *WLT 329 etc*), RM1005/18 (ALC 290A, PVS 828; *5, 18 CLT*), RM1204/18 (204/18 CLT), RM1562/8 (562 CLT, BNK 324A *568 CLT*), RM1627, 1735 (627, 735 DYE), RM1913/33 (ALD 913/33B), RM2071/89 (ALM 71, 89B), of which RM324, 1933, 2071/89 went to Stagecoach London and RM1204/18, 1562, 1627, 1735, 1913 to First London for heritage routes.

RML2734/44 (SMK 734/44F) have been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet. Volvo Olympians VA19, 20, 41-4 (R919/20 WOE, R941-4 YOV) have gone to UK North, Manchester.

Loveden, Leadenham, Lincs

Unusual Optare-bodied Leyland Olympian E151 OMD is here from Northern Blue, Burnley. Also here is one-time Nottingham City Leyland Atlantean/Roe NNN 477W, from Marshall, Sutton-on-Trent.

Luckett, Fareham

New allover white Scania N94D OmniDekka/East Lancs YN55 NDY has been transporting University of Chichester students between Bognor Regis and Chichester.

Ludlow, Halesowen

Scania CN94UB OmniCity YN05 HGC is numbered 25.

M Travel, Glasshoughton, W Yorks

A second ex-Arriva North East DAF SB220/Optare Delta DP48F here is F701 ECC.

Marchwood, Totton

Solent Blue Line-liveried DAF SB220/Optare Delta 502 has been re-registered SBL 364.

Metrobus GA

More Scania OmniCity CN94UB/B37D for Crawley town services are 552-8 (YN55 PWJ-L/O/U/V/X). .

Metroline DG

As reported in this month's In London, pending delayed delivery of the Alexander Dennis Enviro400s, several First London Dennis Tridents were expected on loan to replace the AV-class Volvo Olympians on route 4. And up to eight London United Dennis Darts were to be hired towards the end of December to remove ramp-less single-door Darts from the fleet pending the completion of delivery of the batch of DLD-class Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts for the 214.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers DL6, 7 (P206/7 OLX) have been withdrawn and DL82 (R182 VLA) has been stored.

Above: MK Metro 81 (YN55 PZY), one of eight new Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UBs branded for cross-Milton Keynes route 5. They wear the recently introduced orange/blue livery that replaces the previous yellow/blue style. TIM CARTER

MHS, Stourport-on-Severn

New Mercedes-Benz Vario/Mellor SS05 MHS is at work.

MK Metro

Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Compass B44F 62-4 (T408/25/4 LGP), new to Limebourne, rejoin 53-8 (NDZ 7935/3/19/26, 4521, 7918 *T410/06/9/22/3/04 LGP*) acquired a couple of years ago. Caetano converted them to single-door before they entered service at the new Northampton depot — a haulage yard near Billing Aquadrome — which opened on 19 September.

Also allocated there are Optare Solos 12 and 24 and one spare vehicle. Northampton Council contract services operated are Monday-Saturday 3/43 (Northampton-Rye Hill-Harpole), 11 (Northampton-Parklands) and 21 (Northampton-University Park Campus). Solo 24 is branded for the 11.

Ex-Trent Barton Mercedes-Benz Vario R828 WBC is numbered 124 and takes the place, and fleetnumber, of the Vario written off in early 2005. It entered service in Trent Barton red, but was quickly repainted into Green Travel livery.

Further to last month's report, Tellings-Golden Miller X27 Solent Express-liveried Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 95/6 (W905/6 UJM) were on loan from August until early-November and were used on service 5 until the new Scanias arrived. Scania 140 (S340 SET) has been renumbered 80 in series with the new L94s.

Many thanks to Northampton depot supervisor Matt Cooper for this update.

Mott, Aylesbury

New here is Mercedes-Benz Vario O815/Sitcar Beluga C29F GT05 MTT.

Moxon, Oldcotes, Notts

Bova Futura YD02 PXM has been re-registered M9 XON, following sale of the previous holder of this mark, Bova Y661 HWY.

Mulley, Ixworth, Suffolk

The first new vehicle for many years is BMC Falcon/B40F AE55 NYL.

National Express NX

Scania K114/Irizar PB NXL15-20 (YN05 WJA/C/D/F/G, WKP) have extraordinary roofbox destination displays, which are legible but at some cost to aesthetics and maybe aerodynamics.

Network Colchester TGM

Volvo B10BLEs W901/2/7 UJM have been numbered 381/2/7 and are for normal use, not contracts. W905/6 UJM are expected to follow here after loan to MK Metro.

The 104-year-old former tram shed part of the historic Magdalen Street depot, still owned by Colchester Borough Council, is being leased to First Essex Buses to house 16 Scanias.

Newport Transport

Optare MetroRiders 86/7/9 (R86/7/9 BDW etc) have been withdrawn following a cutback in midibus services, reducing fleet strength to 77. Scania N113CRB/Alexander Strider 5 (K105 KTX) has been sold to Teen Challenge, Newport, as a mobile café, replacing former West Midlands Leyland National KOM 790P.

Norfolk County Services

The first local services (as opposed to park-&-ride) are Norwich Orbital services 550/551, which began on 28 November with purple SlimLine B23F Optare Solos YJ55 YHG/H/K/M-P/R.

Norfolk Green, King's Lynn

New for Norwich Tesco services is Optare Solo 613 (MX55 WCU).

Nottingham City Transport

The first low-floor double-decker in two-tone green Nottingham Network livery is Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolyne 430 (V430 DRA), while the repainting of 206/7 (YN04 ANR, AMX) into this scheme means all of the Scania N94UB/East Lancs OmniTowns are now so treated, reallocated to Newark and given Pathfinder/Southwell Sprinter branding.

East Lancs-bodied Volvo Olympians 492/3 (P492/3 FRR) and Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type 769 (N769 WRC) are in the South Notts-branded version of this livery, leaving just Olympians 490/1 (P490/1 CVO) in the blue/cream inherited from South Notts at Gotham.

Only nine vehicles remained in the traditional green/cream livery in September, Trident/East Lancs Lolyne 412 (T412 BNN), Volvo B10B/Alexander Striders 600-3/12/3, 764 (M664 KHP, M601-3 TTV, N612/3 YRA, M919 MRW) and B10B/Plaxton Verde 766 (N779 DKH).

Notts & Derby WG

Optare Excel 152 (P152 CTV) is transferred here from long-term storage at Trent Barton.

Below: Turkish-built BMC Falcon AE55 NYL, the first new bus in many years for Mulley's of Ixworth, leaving Bury St Edmunds on a tendered service to Red Lodge on 9 November. IVAN WATTS

Above: Optare Tempo demonstrator YJ55 BLX in service with Preston Bus in November. The employee-owned company was comparing it with rival products from Scania , Volvo and Alexander Dennis. LUKE GOTTARD

OFJ Connections, Staines
This operator — which runs NCP shuttle buses at Heathrow — has taken delivery of Mercedes-Benz Vario O814/Plaxton Cheetah C29F YN05 ZXJ and MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution B22D AE05 OVB.

Owens, Oswestry
A new Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther C49Ft is YN05 XZG.

Oxford Bus Company GA
Volvo B10B/Northern Counties 651-5 (K125-9 BUD) are due to follow 656 to Solent Blue Line. They were converted to single door here, with Solent Blue Line adding four more seats (B47F) and repainting them before putting them into service. Optare MetroRider ancillary vehicle 959 (G781 WFC) has gone to Wilts & Dorset for spares.

Grant Palmer, Dunstable
An addition to the fleet in October was Mercedes-Benz Citaro KH05 PAL.

People's Express, West Bromwich
The West Midland traffic commissioner has reduced this company's operator licence vehicle authorisation from 160 to 108, barely enough to cover the peak vehicle requirement, and has prohibited any increase for 12 months.

Peterborough City Council
New Optare Solos 585-8 are confirmed registered MX05 OUE/C/D/F.

Plymouth Citybus
The PSV Circle reports that Volvo B10M/Plaxton coaches 307-9/11/2 (N307 UTT, P308 CTT, P309 STA. W311/2 SDV) have been re-registered JSK 261-5, while 340/1/6/50 (JSK 261/2/4/5; *F973/68/88 HE, A602 UGE*) have reverted to their original registrations.

Poppleton, Pontefract
The fire here is now known to have claimed MCW Metrobus B271 WUL, Leyland Lynx F401 PUR, Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Premiere L103 SDY and DAF/Duple PIL 2750.

Premiere, Nottingham
Leyland Lynx G73/7 UYV are here from Poynter, Wye.

Preston Bus
The first of four demonstrators borrowed in November was red/silver Optare Tempo YJ55 BLX, which was to be followed by a Scania OmniCity, a Volvo B7RLE and an Alexander Dennis Enviro300. This calls into question an earlier report of a firm order for seven OmniCity single-deckers.

Regular correspondent Jeff Watson confirms that three new 33-seat Optare Solos were due before Christmas, with an option for a further 13. Sixteen vehicles are required for the long-awaited new orbital route.

Even though they are to be replaced soon, Leyland Lynxes 216/7 (G216/7 KRN), have been repainted.

Pulfrey, Foston, Lincs
Former Target, Cramlington NK53 KGG, a Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2, has been acquired mainly for service 605 (Grantham-Woolsthorpe).

Pullman, Penclawdd
Swansea Council has provided B31F Optare Solo SlimLines YJ55 BGO/U/V/X with Welsh Assembly funding to operate services 141 (Swansea-Morriston-Llangyfelach-Gorseinon) and 142 (Swansea-Morriston-Felindre-Garnswllt) in the Lliw area north of Swansea. They wear Lliw link/Cyswllt Lliw green livery by Best Impressions.

Raicha Travels, Leicester
Mercedes-Benz Vario/Optare YN55 KLU is at work.

Reading Transport
Optare Tempo demonstrator YJ05 JWZ was used on the Thames Valley Park contract from 7 to 9 November.

Scania OmniDekka 818 (YN55 NJZ) was delivered to Reading on 28 October but had not entered service nearly a month later. Being a stock vehicle, it has to be fitted with the on board computers and radio for Reading's real-time passenger information system. It was also retrofitted with Reading's standard seats and, as they are of a different weight, will need to be recertified.

DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 739 (YG02 FWC) has gone to North West Bus & Coach Refurbishment at Blackburn for repair and will return in generic livery. 703 (K703 BBL) — sold to Ensign, Purfleet — is to joint the City Sightseeing fleet.

Further to last month's report, First points out the Wright StreetCar demonstrator was staffed by its representatives while it was on loan to Reading Transport for Reading Borough Council's conference on 6 October.

Red Arrow, Huddersfield
Ex-Nottingham Volvo Citybus/East Lancs Pyoneer FE02 AKX has been re-registered RED 448. It has been joined by older Citybus B10M-50/Northern Counties Palatine H45/35F G645 BPH.

Renown, Bexhill
Volvo B10M-50 Citybus/Northern Counties and Leyland Olympian/ECW form most of the double-deck stock here, the former represented by 26/7/9, 33/6-38 (G126/7 NGN, J227 HMY, G133 PGK, G866/7 WGW, G138 PGK), the latter by 41/2/4/5/7, 50 (C521 LJR, D162, 214 FYM, C25, 37 CHM, D180 FYM).

Also acquired are ex-Arriva the Shires & Essex (new to London) Olympian/ECW H46/26D D167-9, 211 FYM, via Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Richardson Travel, Midhurst, W Sussex
Volvo B10M-50 Citybus/Alexander 130/9/40/4/8 (F120/39/40/4 PHM, G148 TYT) are all in use here.

Road Car YT
The six Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Geminis due next spring are for the Lincoln-Skegness corridor.

The remaining ex-Black Prince Mercedes-Benz O405/Optare Prismas, 203/4 (R203 YOR; TIL 7901, *R201 YOR*) have been received in latest Road Car livery and join 201/2 (S901/2 DUB) at Gainsborough.

Further acquisitions, from Keighley & District, are 648-50/7 (L648-51 MYG), Leyland Olympian ON2R56C16Z4/Alexander RH H45/29F, after repainting and preparation by Yorkshire Traction. They join identical 651-5 (L601-5 NOS) here, new to Sheffield Omnibus but here since 2000. Ex-Lincoln City Transport Olympians 648/9 (C48 KBE, A208 DTO) have been renumbered 1648/9, pending withdrawal.

Also withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 366/71/3/8/9/92 (F306 FWB, H201, 313 TWE, H98 UWA, H319 TWE, J392 AWB), and Leyland Tigers 429/33 (429 SAR, *EWY 27Y;* MSV 927, *A33 LWX*).

Safeguard, Guildford
New here is Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon C53F YN05 HUY.

Semmence, Wymondham
David Smith kindly corrects the information last month; the two Dennis Javelins reported are actually 790 CVD and H177 EJU, both with Plaxton Paramount 3200 III C57F bodies. G454 PGO was not acquired.

Shamrock, Pontypridd
New MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution B40F AE05 OVC and AE55 EHN work new Thomas of Barry services X44/X45 (Llantwit Major-Cardiff circular via Cowbridge [X44] or Barry [X45]).

Silverdale, Nottingham
Former Nottingham City Leyland National 2 B719 LAL has passed to Sharpe, Cropwell Bishop.

Solent Blue Line GA
Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladins 520-5 (K125-30 BUD) are due from Oxford Bus Company, to be converted to single-door from B43D at Oxford and upseated to B47F on arrival. B47F 525 was on the Isle of Wight undergoing repaint into Bluestar livery in late-November. They will be used on Bluestar 1 (Southampton-Winchester) and Bluestar 3 (Southampton-Hedge End), as will existing B10B/Alexander Striders 526-8 (L526-8 YDL), which will also receive Bluestar livery. This will allow the hired

continued overleaf...

Below: Following apparently unhappy experiences with double-deckers, Solent Blue Line has borrowed two Plaxton Excalibur-bodied Volvo B10Ms from Oxford Bus Company to test customer reaction to the return of coaches to the X27 Solent Shuttle. DAVID JUKES

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
BL Blazefield Holdings
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
WG Wellglade Group
YT Traction Group

Optare MetroRiders to return to Wilts & Dorset. Hired Thamesdown Darts 128/30 (N128 LMW, XBZ 7730 *M409 XTC*, *MAN 15D*) returned to Swindon on 14 November, but managed a few opportune trips on Guildford-Aldershot emergency rail replacement for South West Trains on the way.

The Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur coaches on hire from Oxford for Solent Shuttle have been numbered 108/9 (R108/9 YUD). They are expected to stay until March 2006 while Solent Blue Line evaluates passenger response to this type of vehicle.

The relaunch of the Eastleigh network as Red Rockets has been deferred again until March. Meanwhile, after a lengthy gap following the repainting of the other 11 Mini Pointer Darts, 579 has been repainted into red.

Transferred in from Southern Vectis are Iveco 59.12/Marshall B23F 242/3/7 (N242/3 PDL, P247 VDL) and driver trainer Phoenix-bodied 289 (H289 DDL).

Southern Transit, Brighton

Mike Penn confirms that Leyland Olympian/Alexander F635 LMJ is here, ex-Western Greyhound. Meanwhile another ex-Hedingham Leyland coach is Tiger/Plaxton Supreme VI Express C53F GVS 948Y.

Southern Vectis GA

The fleet transferred to Go-Ahead ownership included Land Rover Defender-based Land Train tractor and two trailers 5609 (M712 LJT) based at Shanklin, similar 5610 (B874 BYA) based at Sandown and Dotto Land Train and two trailers 5611 (R851 LDF) based at Ryde. Iveco 59.12s 242/3/7 (N242/3 PDL, P247 VDL) and 289 (H289 DDL) have gone to Solent Blue Line.

Speedwell, Glossop

Another Mercedes-Benz 709D is ex-Leven Valley, Middlesbrough (new to Dublin Bus) N645 HSX with Leicester Carriage Builders body.

Stagecoach Cambridgeshire ST

The outstanding Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 H47/28F for Cambridge Citi services are 18842/4/6 (AE55 DJF/L/O). Meanwhile, at Peterborough and with full Peterborough Citi branding is former Carlisle-based (flood damaged) TransBus Pointer Dart 34479 (PX53 DKF).

Transfers in from Stagecoach East are Volvo Olympian/Alexander DPs 16210/2/6/7 (R560/2/6/7 DRP) at Cambridge (16210/1/16) and Peterborough (16217).

Service changes at Peterborough on 23 October, which include a new Citi6 providing a 20min frequency between the city centre and the new developed Hampton areas, saw Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200s 33393/6/9 (R353/6 LER, R366 JVA) transfer from Cambridge.

Fire-damaged Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Mistral 52620 (S460 BCE) has been sold to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

Stagecoach East ST

New are Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 34771-3 (KX55 UDB/D/E) at Northampton. 34771/2 are branded for route 1 (Greyfriars Bus Station-Rectory Farm). Three Pointer Darts and a double-decker are due at Kettering for service 19 (Kettering-Market Harborough). Delivery of the awaited Optare Solos for Kettering is postponed until the New Year.

The Darts reported last month on Bedford park-&-ride, 33181-4 (VX51 RBZ, RCU/F, RBY) have Alexander ALX200 bodywork; 33181-3 were used previously by Bharat Travel, Southall, on its 805 service to Heathrow.

Volvo Olympian/Alexander DPs 16210/2/6/7 (R560/2/6/7 DRP) have gone to Stagecoach Cambridgeshire, while Kettering-based heritage Bristol FLF6G/ECW open-topper 19952 (JAH 552D) has been moved to March outstation. Covered-top 19953 (JAH 553D) remains in use at Northampton.

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

Another Megabus-liveried Neoplan Skyliner is 50150 (YN05 WEK). Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Mistral 50 C46Ft 52622 (S902 CCD) is at Chesterfield from Stagecoach North West.

Hull-based Dennis Dominators 15046/9 (F146/9 BKH) have gone to Stagecoach Bluebird, Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type 20744 (K744 DAO) to Stagecoach Merseyside,

The last Stagecoach striped bus at Chesterfield was Volvo Olympian 16488 (N138 AET).

Stagecoach London ST

After two-and-a-half years, AEC Routemasters returned here on 14 November, when they re-entered service on short workings of route 15 between Tower Hill and Trafalgar Square. Marshall-refurbished Park Royal H36/28R-bodied RM324, 652, 871 (WLT 324 etc), RM1933/41/68 (ALD 933B etc) and RM2050/60/71/89 (ALM 50B etc) are leased from Transport for London. RM324, 1933, 2071/89 were previously with London Sovereign, RM652, 871, 1941/68, 2050/60 with Arriva London North Stagecoach's own AEC-engined RML2760 has also appeared on the route.

LOTS reports that Alexander Dennis Enviro400 18500 is to be registered R30 SOL (**R**oute **30** ***S**pirit **o**f **L**ondon*). Also new are Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 H45/22D 18470-80 (LX55 ERJ/K/O/U/V/Y/Z, ESF/G/N/O).

Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Mistral 50 C46Ft 52615/6/23 (S905/6 JHG, S903 CCD) are here from Stagecoach North West.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

Ex-Hong Kong Leyland Olympians 13501/20 were towed to Hyde Road on 3 November and are to be stripped for spares, but 13628 is registered K688 CBA and will work from Princess Road. MAN 18.220/Alexander ALX300 B42F 22819 (X819 SRM), a former Stagecoach North West Carlisle flood victim, is in service at Stockport after a brief stay at Glossop.

Dennis Dominator 15040 (H140 GVM) and Scania N113DRBs 15315/44 (H465 GVM, J144 HMT), 15346/52/6/9/60 (K846 LMK etc) have received Magic Bus livery.

Volvo B10M/Alexander PSs 20845-50/7-9 (P845 GND etc) have gone to Stagecoach Merseyside. Megabus Leyland Olympian 13623 (H494 LNA) and Neoplan Skyliner 50148 (MX05 BWM) have transferred to North West at Preston following changes to the Megabus.com network.

Further ex-London FX4 taxis for crew reliefs are 92101/3 (K104 EYF, K654 NME).

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40434, 40660 (N884 AVV, N660 VSS) are not withdrawn but 40431/2 (N881/2 AVV) are. Fire-damaged Scania 15314 (H464 GVM) and ex-Dennis's Dart 33090 (R573 ABA) are to be scrapped; the Scania never received Magic Bus livery as planned. Ex-Merseyside Leyland Lynx 29132 (F204 MBT) has also gone for scrap without being used as a trainer.

Stagecoach Merseyside ST

More Volvo B10M/Alexander PS B49F from Stagecoach Manchester are 20845-50/7-9 (P845 GND etc) and another from Stagecoach East Midland is 20744 (K744 DAO), while Leyland Olympian/Alexander **14985** (K235 NHC) has come from Stagecoach South East (not 14988 as shown last month).

Dennis Dart 32179 (K767 OGK) has been repainted in Glenvale red with Stagecoach fleetnames.

Leyland Titan 10632 (NUW 632Y) is due for imminent withdrawal. Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 32913 (L113 HHV) has been sold to Carter, Ipswich and Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 30924 (L423 XVV) to Hulme Hall, Cheadle Hulme.

Stagecoach North East ST

Stagecoach North West Volvo B10M-55/Northern Counties B48F 20291 (M401 SPY), Alexander B49F-bodied 20838 (P838 GND) and Alexander Strider-bodied B10B-58 21001 (M901 DRG) are transferred here.

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H45/26F 16431/3/6/7 (VLT 255, WLT 528, 647/85 DYE; *N331/3/6/7 HGK*) have moved from Busways to Transit and Dennis Dart/Alexander B40F 32717 (K717 PCN) and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander B23F 40497 (N497 RVK) have moved the other way.

Stagecoach North West ST

Following the loss of National Express work, Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 52446 (R456 FCE) has gone to Stagecoach Warwickshire, B10M/Jonckheere Mistrals 52615/6/23 (S905/6 JHG, S903 CCD) to Stagecoach London, 52622 (S902 CCD) to Stagecoach East Midlands and B12M/Plaxton Paragons 53012-21 (VU03 VVW-Z, VWA/W, PX03 KCN/U/V/Y) to Stagecoach South East.

Below: Stagecoach East Midland 33762 (R462 LSO), an Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, in the new Pronto livery used for both operators' vehicles on the combined service with Trent Barton between Nottingham and Chesterfield. BEN MORROLL

However, Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Mistral C49Ft 52648/9 (T668/ XTV) and B12M/Plaxton Paragon C46Ft 53022 (YV03 TZN) have been received from Stagecoach Warwickshire and B10M/Jonckheere Mistral C49Ft 52658/9 (V908/9 DDY) from East Kent.

Volvo B6 30665 (L665 MSF), Mercedes-Benz 709D 40519 (N519 BJA) and Mercedes Varios 42670/2 (R70/2 LFV) have been placed in reserve. 709D 40424 (K124 XHG) has gone for scrap, but Varios 42534/62 (P534/5 PNE) have entered service in West Cumbria.

Leyland Leopard driver trainer 25753 (EGB 53T), Mercedes 709D 40882 (L882 SDY), accident victim Vario 42538 (P538 PNE) and Dodge Commando trainer 48029 (D375 DCK) have all been withdrawn.

AEC Routemasters RML2624/41 (NML 624/41E) remain in store at Preston, and RML2657/71 (NML 657E, SMK 671F) plus Megabus Olympians 13629/31/40/6/52 (H295/2 LNA, G283 YRJ, H463/2 EJR) are at Carlisle.

There are still 11 closed-top Leyland Titans at Morecambe.

Stagecoach Oxfordshire ST

The first new vehicles to be delivered to Banbury depot since Western Travel's last new vehicle, 307 (L307 SKV) in 1994, are Optare Solos 47236-9 (KX55 RBV/Y/Z, RCF), two for services B1/B2 and two for the 488.

Stagecoach South East ST

Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon Expressliner C46Ft 53012-21 (VU03 VVW-Z, VWA/W, PX03 KCN/U/V/Y) are at East Kent from Stagecoach North West, while B10M/Jonckheere Mistrals 52658/9 (V908/9 DDY) have gone to North West.

Stagecoach Cheltenham & Gloucester Mercedes-Benz 711D/UVG CitiStar B27F 41159 (N159 MTG) and Plaxton Beaver B27F-bodied 41171 (P171 TNY) are on loan to Hampshire Bus at Winchester.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40938 (N938 NAP) has been withdrawn.

Stagecoach Wales ST

For schools contract work, Volvo B10M/Plaxton Interurban 52401/2 (P771/2 TTG) in Red & White Coaches livery have been upseated to C70F from C51F and Alexander PS-bodied 20365 (M765 LAX) is DP62F, ex-DP48F. The Interurbans replaced the Dennis Javelins lost in the Pontypool depot fire.

Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type 20420 (H620 ACK) is withdrawn, possibly for transfer elsewhere. Also withdrawn are Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 32992/7 (K92/7 BNY) — 32997 was rebodied in 1995, Dart/Wright Handybus 32994 (K94 AAX) and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40564 (M364 LAX).

Stagecoach Warwickshire ST

Ex-Stagecoach London Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 33351-6 (P801-6 NJN) are at Rugby, retrimmed and converted to B34F. They are branded for upgraded service 4 (Brownsover-Bilton) and ousted the remaining Volvo B6LE/ALX200s, 31321-6 (P321-6 JND), which have converted service 1 (Woodlands-Lower Hillmorton) to low-floor; 31321-4 are branded for service 1, while unbranded 31325/6 are spares for services 1, 4 and 63/64. Darts and a B6 have been fitted with assault screens and closed circuit television systems for increased night-bus services in Rugby.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40158/9 (N358/9 AVV) from service 1 have gone to Stagecoach Bluebird.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 2 C46Ft 52446 (R456 FCE) has come from Stagecoach North West, but Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Mistral C49Ft 52648/9 (T668/9 XTV) and B12M/Plaxton Paragon C46Ft 53022 (YV03 TZN) have gone the other way.

Midland Red-liveried Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type 20202 (M202 LHP) has been repainted into Stagecoach livery. The pink-liveried UniBus-branded Volvo Olympians at Leamington are 16072, 16514/5/6/7, 16614/5/6/7/8/9/20.

After being in reserve for around a month, Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright NimBus 41505 (H495 MRW) has returned to service at Rugby, along with Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-type 20417 (H617 ACK).

Leyland Lynx driver trainer 29617 (G617 CEF) has been withdrawn for disposal.

Stagecoach West ST

Cheltenham District has received its two Optare Solo SlimLine B28F, 47241/2 (KX55 SBO/U).

Stagecoach and Gloucestershire County Council have secured Kick-start funding to upgrade Cheltenham town services D/E during 2006, with four new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts being used to increase the frequency to every 10min.

Cheltenham & Gloucester Mercedes-Benz 711Ds 41159/71 (N159 MTG, P171 TNY), have gone on loan to Stagecoach South East. Cheltenham & Gloucester's remaining Leyland Lynx, 29614 (G614 CEF) has moved to the driver training fleet.

Another Iveco/Mellor runaround (former minibus) repainted into corporate livery is 46610 (R610 KDD)

Cheltenham District operated a special service for Cheltenham Races on 11-13 November. Five vehicles were hired in, including two Leyland Titans from Stagecoach Wales and now regular performer ex-Cheltenham District Bristol VRT 15760 and two Volvo Olympians from Stagecoach South East.

Stansted Transit

Ex-London Leyland Olympian/ECWs from Ensign (dealer), Purfleet are D182/94/5, 212/9/28/45 FYM, acquired along with ex-Arriva Southern Counties Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer J309 WHJ and Optare MetroRiders P427 VRG, M810, 975 WWR.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

Dennis Dart K716 KGU Leyland Olympian/ECW C174/6 ECK and Alexander-bodied F303 JTY have been added to fleet strength from sales stock. The coach-seated Olympians will all be fitted with bus seats, those in ex-Ribble C174/6 ECK coming from Olympian A115 UDM, which was acquired for spares.

Open-top Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW UWV 618S has a new home with the baseball team at Lindenwold, New Jersey, USA.

Stratford Blue EB

New Volvo B7L/Ayats half open-topper EU05 VBP replaced MCW Metrobus 205 at the end of the summer season, the latter despatched to Ensign sales stock. Leyland Tiger WPH 139Y has gone to Trustline, Stansted and Plaxton Paramount B167 XBU to Regal Coaches, Edgware.

Sullivan Buses, South Mimms

MCW Metrobuses M276, 1309 (BYX 276V, C309 BUV), Optare MetroRider MRL152 (H152 UUA) and Leyland Olympian JHU 912X have been sold.

Sunrise Travel, West Bromwich

Optare MetroRider J692 CGK is in stock.

Supreme, Hadleigh, Essex

Sold by the receiver to Bob Vale Coach Sales are Volvo B10M/Berkhof L100 SUP, Neoplan N116s P972 HWF and R290 THL, Scania L94/Irizar R874 SDT and Volvo B10M/Plaxton CAZ 6273 (*A519 NCL*).

Thamesdown Transport

Senior traffic commissioner Philip Brown opened the new Barnfield Road depot on 6 October. This was followed by a public open day on 16 October. Dennis Darts 128/30 (N128 LMW, XBZ 7730; *M409 XTC, MAN 15D*) have returned from loan to Solent Blue Line.

TM Travel, Chesterfield

As illustrated last month, the first of the two B28F-seated Plaxton Primo midibuses entered service in November registered YN55 KMV. New Dennis Dart/East Lancs YT55 TMT has had gold 'Celebrating 10 Years of Service' lettering added. It is used chiefly on service 293 (Royal Hospital Calow-Meadowhall).

Leyland Olympian/ECW D161/86/92 FYM entered service after bodywork attention by Plaxton at Anston. Olympians D147/61 FYM, G524 VBB and G370 YUR have been repainted red and cream. Olympian/Optare H47/29F E155 OMD came from Northern Blue, but was not retained, while Alexander H45/30F-bodied E221 WBG was on loan from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), to cover for an awaited vehicle, but wasn't used.

TransLinc, Lincoln

New Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah YN05 ZXE is in use.

Travel Express, Wolverhampton

Another ex-Rossendale early Dennis Dart/Carlyle Dartline is H127 MOB. Darts in use are MUI 1346 (G37 TGW) still in full JP Travel, Manchester livery, H109/27 MOB in full Rossendale livery, D603 ACW operating in Black Prince livery without fleetnames, H802 OPT in plain Go North East livery and J232 JJR in MK Metro livery.

Travel London NX

New are Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini H45/24D V22/4-6/9 (BX55 XLT/V/W, XMB). Optare Solo S231/3 (S231/3 EWU) have been withdrawn at Byfleet and will join the rest at Travel West Midlands (q.v.).

Travel West Midlands NX

The Scania OmniCity N94UD4/H45/27F double-decker — 4697 (YN55 PXB) — appeared briefly in October then returned to Scania. It's back and ready to enter service at Perry Barr, which rules out its reported use on the 900 (Birmingham-Airport-Coventry) (*Buses* November)

continued overleaf...

Right: Travel West Midlands has begun evaluating one of the first Polish-built Scania OmniCity double-deck seed vehicles. 4697 (YN55 PXB) is based at Perry Barr. TONY HUNTER

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

BL Blazefield Holdings

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

WG Wellglade Group

YT Traction Group

Above: Yorkshire Traction 519 (YJ55 BLK), one of the latest Optare Solos in the yellow and purple livery applied to its newest low-floor buses in place of traditional red and cream. DANIEL STAZICKER

Ex-Travel London Optare Solo S234 EWU was noted under preparation as 334. The batch is due here as 331-40 (S231-40 EWU) to replace Mercedes-Benz minibuses at Pensnett; the 32xx fleetnumbers quoted last month would appear to be an error. Meanwhile ex-Travel London Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B28D 3607/8/10 (W607/8 MWJ, C8 NEX) have been noted at Birmingham Central, to replace Mercedes minibuses at West Bromwich.

Further MCW Metrobuses route-branded as service 26 Saver Buses are 3026/8 (F26/8 XOF). Mercedes-Benz O405Ns 1663/4/75/81/99 are branded for Inner Circle service 8 and Volvo B7TLs 4030-2/4 for Hagley Road services. Dennis Tridents 4367/72 have a new style branding for service 50, which includes the route number in Contravision over the lower saloon windows.

Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President 4086 has been noted with new circular front headlamps in place of rectangular ones fitted from new and are believed to be sodium discharge units.

Withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz Vario 250 (R250 XDA), Metrobus 2950 (D950 NDA) and Leyland Lynx driver trainer 9149 (G149 EOG), but Volvo B10L 1458 (P458 JOX) and Metrobus 2624 (ROX 624Y) have been reinstated.

Sold are Lynxes 1154, 1294 (G154, 294 EOG) and Metrobuses 2607, 2862 (POG 607Y, B862 DOM) while 2549, 2818 (POG 549Y, B818 AOP) have gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap. Disposals of MkII Metrobuses continue apace, 2968 (A108 WVP) to Voel, Dyserth; 2877 (B877 DOM) to M Travel, Normanton, 2957 (D957 NDA) to C&M, Chatham. Metrobus 2604 (POG 604Y) is with The Bus Business, Spofforth, converted to open-top and covered in green baize and was used by the Nando's restaurants for publicity work in connection with the Ashes test cricket series. Duke, Berry Hill has taken Mercedes-Benz Vario/Alexander ALX100s P251/3/4 RUM.

Trent Barton WG

Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladins 126/9 (L126 LRA, M129 PRA) have been reinstated, but Optare Excels 168/89 and 201 (S168/9 UAL, V201 ENU) are further examples withdrawn.

However, Excels 156-8 (S156-8 UAL) have been resuscitated for TransPeak service TP (Derby-Manchester) after two years in store at Sutton Junction. They have new floors, engines and gearboxes. Excels 258-64 (Y258/9/72/61-4 DRC) are due to receive Skyline livery for Dove Holes depot, releasing earlier 206-12, and 265/6 (Y265/6 DRC) are to appear in a blue livery for service 107 (Derby-Ashbourne), Trent's first route.

Matlock-based Optare Solo 419 (W419 YAL) is in caramel livery for short working on service 6.1 (Matlock-Wirksworth). Other variations on this service are similarly unusually numbered 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 6.X.

The company was expected to withdraw from National Express duties on services 326, 440 and 450 at the end of December, rendering coaches 9-15 surplus.

Excel 151 (P151 CTV) has passed to Kimes, Folkingham, rejoining re-registered 149 (WAZ 8276, *P201 BNR*) there, and 205 (V205 ENU) has rejoined 203/4 with Konectbus, Dereham. Mercedes-Benz Vario 287 (S287 UAL) is with Doyle, Ripley.

Thanks to Adrian Healey for a bumper crop of notes this month.

UK North, Gorton, Manchester

Acquisitions are ex-London United Volvo Olympian/Alexander (Belfast) H47/25D R919/20 WOE, R941-4 YOV and ex-Go North East Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer B40F L407 GDC, new to OK Travel.

Volvo Olympian/East Lancs Pyoneer 201 (P344 ROO) is back in service after having its damaged upper deck rebuilt.

Val's Classic, Chase Terrace, Staffs

Sadly, the fleet of rare six-wheel Bedford VAL70s is being reduced; 14 September saw Plaxton Elite-bodied LUR 510L follow Caetano Estoril-bodied YYB 239H to Duffy, Macclesfield for preservation. Fleet downsizing has prompted Duple Viceroy-bodied RBC 345G and rare Van Hool Astradome-bodied VAL70 RAR 690J to be offered for sale.

This move is expected to leave only three twin-steer Bedfords — VAL14/Plaxton EHL 472D, and two VAL70s, UWX 981F with Plaxton Panorama I coachwork, plus Panorama Elite-bodied VBD 310H.

Unused MCW Metroliner coach C217 KMA, acquired from Allan & Black, Aboyne, has passed to O'Keefe, Croydon.

Leyland National THX 196S has been sold to a preservationist in Crawley, while former London DMS-class Daimler Fleetline/Park Royal GHV 67N and rare MCW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL JOV 701P have gone to the Wythall Museum to provide spares for other vehicles in its collection.

11.3m Leyland Tiger/Duple Laser 2 B61 GSC passed to Wharf Lane Metals (dealer), Chasetown.

Voel, Dyserth

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer W984 WDS has been sold to Bu Val of Smithybridge.

Western Greyhound, Newquay

Managing director Mark Howarth, tells me that he has bought AEC Routemaster RM1062. It is not part of the Western Greyhound fleet, but the company may use it occasionally.

Wheels, Hinckley

Another ex-Midland Red vehicle is N3-class Leyland National GOL 399N from Val's Classic, Chase Terrace.

Whippet, Fenstanton, Cambs

The ex-Anderson of London Setras, BD02 HDG/J, replaced Volvo B10M/Van Hool N653/4 EWJ.

Ex-Reliance, Sutton-on-the-Forest Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 V293 UVY, latterly on hire to Whitelaw, Stonehouse, has been noted here. Volvo B10BLE S134 EJE is in fleet livery ex-Cambridgeshire Key Routes scheme.

Volvo Citybus/Alexander G145 TYT has been withdrawn following an accident in June.

Whittlebus, Kidderminster EY

Volvo B10M/Alexander PS M424/5 RRN have returned to East Yorkshire, and have been replaced by similar 62/3 (M418/23 RRN). Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 452/3 (R452/3 PRH) have also come from East Yorkshire.

Williams, Ancaster, Lincs

Leyland Titan OHV 688Y, Leyland Olympian/ECW AEF 226Y and Olympian/East Lancs B554/8 ATX and BHZ 9541 (*B555 ATX*) have been added to stock, B554 ATX is in a revised red livery with shallow grey skirt, edged in white, plus white roof and upper-deck window pillars, also applied to the pair of former Nottingham Leyland Atlanteans. B558 ATX retains the all-over red of previous owner Rennie, Dunfermline.

Williams, Porthmadog

It's not often I can record a Bristol LWL6G/ECW moving around, but former West Yorkshire 4037 is here after a while with Benson, Greasby. Its purpose and condition are not reported.

Wilts & Dorset GA

The Bristol VRT/SL3s are not to receive current livery. Damory Coaches LDV Pilot 5168 (P319 DOP) has been taken into main fleet stock as an ancillary vehicle. Optare MetroRider G781 WFC has been acquired from Oxford Bus Company for spares.

Leyland Lynx 5054 (E65 WDT) has gone for scrap to Wigley, Carlton (dealer), having not been collected by its Chesterfield preservationist prospective owner.

Yorkshire Traction YT

Four new Optare Solos are at Huddersfield for three routes worked on a Metro contract, while two new yellow and purple-liveried Solos are 518/9 (YJ55 BLF/K).

MCW Metroliner double-deck coach 99 is being fitted with a Scania engine.

Leyland Lynx 284 (E24 UNE) has been sold to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer), 282/3/6-8 (E22/3 UNE, F42-4 ENF) also having been scrapped.

Zak's, Great Barr

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts KP02 PUV/X are confirmed here, from Waverley Travel, Edinburgh; reports had also suggested these were with People's Express.

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport

New electronic destination displays show dual Manx-above-English destinations, so for service 18A, the display reads 'Rumsaa' above a smaller Ramsey. This is apparently used at drivers' discretion.

Former Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian/Alexander 99 (DMN 16R) remains here and has been tidied up externally, despite 17-20 (DMN 17-20R) having been sold.

Leyland Olympian/ECW 54 (MAN 54N, *A680 KDV*) is the second former IoMT example to be preserved, as is 57 (MAN 57N, *A686 KDV*), the latter having the historic last ever chassis built by Bristol.

ProTours

Ex-Budden, Romsey Scania K124IB/Berkhof Axial C49Ft 5 (TMN 55, *R297 OJT*) is a new type for Man. Bedford YNT/Plaxton Paramount 8 (MAN 111L, CMN 106, ABC 360Y) has been withdrawn.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks from me on behalf of readers to each of the following for giving your time to contribute to my columns:

Many thanks to all of those of you listed below for your contributions to Fleet News. If your local operator isn't covered as you'd like here, why not send me topical items, so that it can be? But please note that in order to safeguard timely production of material, (following a virus attack from a trusted source in 2005), ***no attachments*** will be opened — so please ensure your content is in text in your messages.

N. Ames, Andrew Babbs, Andrew Bagshaw, Stefan Baguette, Chris Barker, Bill Barlow, Stephen Barton, John Bath, Michael Bewes, Kenneth Bladon, British Bus Publishing, British Trolleybus Society, Ken Bryce, Ivor Bufton, *Bus Fare*, Cambridge Omnibus Society, *Cambus*, Roger Carey, Andrew P. Churchill, Jeff Clayton, Brian Coney, Chris Corroy, Richard Cranmer, Crosville Enthusiasts Club, Cumbria Transport Society, M. G. Davies, Nigel Diplock, Julian Dolman, Barry Drelincourt, Ensignbus, Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group, *Essex Bus News*, Matthew Evans, Ian Francis, Fylde Tramway Society, Greater Manchester Transport Society, Peter Guppy, Robin Hadfield, John L. Hammond, Dave Harries, Adrian Healey, Phil Hiles, Paul N. Hill, Tony F. Hunter, Dave Jessop, Paul D. Johnson, *The Journal*, David Jukes, Steven Knight, Lancaster & Morecambe PSV Society, Paul Landymore, *Lincolnshire & East Yorkshire Transport Review*, London Omnibus Traction Society, Christopher Lowe, M&D and East Kent Bus Club, John Marsh, *M&T News*, Merseyside Bus Club, Geoff Mills, Geoff Nelson, Ross Newman, Steve Newman, Simon Nicholas, Billy Nicol, David A. Noddings, Northern Group Enthusiasts Club, Brendan O'Reilly, PSV Circle, Deric Pemberton, Mike Penn, James Penton, Bob Perrin, John Podgorski, T. S. Powell, H. Powell, Ribble Enthusiasts Club, Graham Richardson, Andy Rigby, Road Car, M. G. Robins, Dave Russell, Norman Sharrock, Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts Society, Ian Simpson, Adrian C. Small, R. G. Smith, Southdown Enthusiasts Club, Eric Speckman, Alan Spencer, Staffordshire Bus Enthusiasts Group, Stagecoach Manchester, Stagecoach Transit, David Stanier, Chris Stewart, Phil Stockley, John Taylor, Thamesdown Transport, Dave B. Thomas, Paul Thompson, Steve Thompson, Nick Thomson, Transpire — The Chesterfield Bus Society, United Enthusiasts Club, J. Watson, Ken Weaver, Michael P. Webster, *Wessex bi-monthly Transport Review*, Wessex Transport Society, *West Yorkshire Information Service*, *West Yorkshire Metro Transport News*, Wheels, Peter White, Lee Whitehead, Steve White's website (spw24.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk), Dave Wilder, Trystan Williams, Wilts & Dorset, John Young, Jim Young.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET: Wilfreda Luxury Coaches Ltd trading as Wilfreda Beehive

BASED: Apex Garage, Church Lane, Adwick-le-Street, Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

WEBSITE: http://www.wilfreda.co.uk

FOUNDED: 1949 when Bill Scholey started the Wilfreda coach company in Bawtry. Expanded from nine coaches to 23 by acquiring Beehive Services in 1987. Sue and Tony Scholey and their sons run it from the former Shearings depot, which it acquired in 1988. Ran competitive bus services with secondhand Leyland Nationals and new Dennis Darts until 1997, when First Mainline took over the routes and some Darts.

WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?: Operates around a dozen contracted bus routes and numerous schools services in the Doncaster area. Most operations are centred on Doncaster and reach out to Worksop, Crystal Peaks, Askern, Scunthorpe and Gainsborough. A town service is operated in Thorne, and a specially-liveried Optare Tempo runs a contracted service from Doncaster to Robin Hood Airport.

LIVERY: Buses and older coaches predominantly white, with or without a blue skirt, with yellow and blue lining out and lettering. Some Optare Solos wear South Yorkshire PTE yellow/blue Rural Links livery. BMC and S-Kool schoolbuses are yellow with blue lettering. Newer coaches carry a fading blue livery, which is giving way to metallic silvery blue.

HOW MANY VEHICLES?: Twenty-four buses (19 bought new) and 28 coaches. Front-line buses are three Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton Beaver minibuses, nine Optare Solos, four BMC 1100FEs, the Tempo and two East Lancs-bodied Scania N113DRB, plus three secondhand Bristol VRs, a Leyland Olympian and a Daimler CCG5 wedding bus. Full-size coaches are a mix of Scanias, Dennis Javelins and a Neoplan Euroliner. There are five Irizar-bodied Scania S-Kool 70-seat school coaches and 17 midi and minicoaches.

NEWEST VEHICLE: A 16-seat long-wheelbase Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, MX55 VJN.

MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?: 1964 Roe-bodied Daimler CCG5 304 VHN, which retains its Darlington Corporation cream livery with light blue coach lines and wheels. A 1955 AEC Reliance with Burlingham Seagull coachwork, RDU 903 new to BTS Motorways of Coventry, is being restored and will enter special service when completed.

Left: 304 VHN, the ex-Darlington Daimler CCG5 with Roe bodywork, is used for weddings and other special events. ANDREW JAROSZ

Below: YJ05 XOO, one of the first Optare Tempos built, wears this striking advertising livery for the service to the new Robin Hood Airport at Finningley. ALAN MILLAR

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

BL Blazefield Holdings

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

WG Wellglade Group

YT Traction Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to: **Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by **19 January** for the **March** issue.

Allan & Black, Aboyne
KVC M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cdi YN05 UVL arrived in October ex-Yoosoof, Batley.

Allander, Milngavie
C49F-seated Bova Futura FLD12-270 P157 XNW joined this fleet in October ex-Burton, Stanton.

A & P Coaches, Glasgow
Alexander B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G260 TSL, previously with Lianne, Renfrew, was acquired by October and is in service in the red and fawn fleet livery.

Similar Alexander (Belfast)-bodied L737/41/9 LWA had gone to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow by September.

Arriva Scotland West AA
Some elements of a merger of this company and Arriva North East appear to be taking place, the first visible indication being the renumbering of Scotland West vehicles into the North East system in November. The first examples reported were Optare MetroRiders 201/7/19/25 (N201/7 NHS, P219/25 SGB) to 2745/51/5/60; Mercedes-Benz 811D 269 (N26 KYS) to 2676; Dennis Darts 404/25/9/31, 844/6 (K539 ORH, N672/85/7 GUM, N474 MUS, K947 SGG) to 1777, 1606/10/5/28, 1789; Scania N113CRL 510 (M110 RMS) to 259; Scania L113CRLs 514/5 (M114/5 RMS) to 262/3; and Dennis Dart SLFs 810/6-8/20/3/62 (P810 DBS, P816-8/20/3 GMS, S862 OGB) to 1420/6-8/30/3/62.

Wright Cadet B39F-bodied DAF SB120 1921 (W82 PRG) was transferred to this fleet from Arriva North East in November and has been allocated to Johnstone depot.

Operation of new Strathclyde Passenger Transport Monday to Saturday daytime service 124 (North Cardonald-Govan Asda via South Cardonald and Mosspark) began on 7 November.

A preservationist purchased former Clydeside 2000 Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D 261 (L866 LFS) from Coakley, Motherwell in November and intends to return it to its original red and yellow livery.

Austin, Earlston
Sitcar Beluga C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D SN03 SXJ joined this fleet in September ex-Woods, Tillicoultry.

Avondale, Clydebank
Further to the October issue, B33F-seated Optare Solo M920 VU02 TSO, was acquired in July together with similar VU02 TTO, both ex-Brylaine, Boston.

Ayrways, Ayr
Duple C57F-bodied Bedford YNV D36 ONY arrived in September ex-Shirran, Lumsden.

Bain, Oldmeldrum
Aberdeen City Council has given this company a contract to provide two late night services on Fridays and Saturdays. They are 912 (Broad Street-Garthdee) and 916 (Broad Street-Northfield), which started on 18 November.

Blue Bus, Shotts
Weekday peak hour service 496 (Whitburn-Bathgate station via Birniehill) was started on 5 December.

Bowman, Craignure
With reference to the October issue, Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied DAF SB3000 N982 FWT (*J17 TRU, 1287 RU, N982 FWT*) was previously with Trueman, Ash Vale.

Brown, Broxburn
Berkhof Axial C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12M FJ05 AOU was new in March.

Buchanan, Liniclate
Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3F/5R RLJ 88X had passed to McDonald, West Gernish by August.

Bulldog, Bathgate
Sunday service 405 (Livingston bus station/Murieston/Carmondean/Kirkton) was started on 20 November.

Christie, Alloa
Alexander H47/31F-bodied Scania N113DRB E307 EVW was acquired in September, having latterly been numbered 307 in the Black Prince, Morley fleet.

Kässbohrer Setra S210HD MIW 4841 (*TSU 608, D907 APM*) was acquired by Lever, St Helens in August.

Coakley, Motherwell
Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D L866 LFS was sold for preservation in November. Similar L862/3 LFS, Leicester Carriage Builders-bodied 709Ds L324/5 AUT, Wright NimBus-bodied Mercedes 811D H176 JVT and Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDL M205 EGF were all out of service at that time and awaiting scrapping.

Collison, Stonehouse
Vehicles sold in recent months include Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D P608 NJN to Fitzcharles, Grangemouth in August; similar 709D N208 CKP to Stuart, Carluke in August; and Wadham Stringer-bodied Dennis Javelin P994 VOS (*P944 VOS*) to Harlequin, Dunblane in September. Wadham Stringer-bodied Dennis Javelin L455 ASU (*74 KK 65*) and Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cdi SA02 RYX have also gone.

Cosgrove (Fisher), Dundee
ECW-bodied Leyland Tigers WPH 137/41Y passed to Tanat Valley, Llanrhaedr-YM in July.

DB Travel, Dumbarton
B31F-seated Optare MetroRider MR15 L733 MWW was acquired in October from Morrin, Glasgow. Similar L202 ONU has lost its Harte, Greenock colours in favour of allover red fleet livery.

DJ International, Barrhead
Jonckheere Mistral 50-bodied Volvo B10M-62s VJI 9410/3 (*HSK 649/6, T718/5 UOS*) were given back their original registrations in July.

Dodds, Ayr
Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62s Y177 KCS (*LSK 502*) and Y524 UOS (*LSK 501*) were re-registered YXD 507 and YWE 840 respectively in April. The new registration for Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 YXD 507 (*J860 WFF, VLT 290, VLT 250, J459 HCA*) is not known.

Donaldson, Strathkinness
Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 WIL 3632 (*K1 TGE*) was sold to Ferguson (dealer), East Whitburn by August.

Dumfries & Galloway Council
Wright Handybus B39F-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDLs CCZ 6610/2 were purchased in October for the DGC Buses fleet, having previously been Ulsterbus 610/2.

Dunn, Port Glasgow
Marshall C19 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D K593 BEG was acquired in August ex-Watermill, Fraserburgh. Similar Plaxton B25F-bodied K234 SFJ had also joined the fleet by November ex-First Stop, Renfrew.

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds F207 DGT and G919 UPP have been sold for scrap.

Edinburgh Tours LB
Operation of the City Sightseeing Edinburgh Tour has been transferred from Lothian Buses to this company. The buses used on the tour, open-top Dennis Tridents 31-4 (W631-4 PSX) and Leyland Olympians 304-6 (E304-6 MSG), and partial open-top Olympians 307-11 (E307-11 MSG) have been transferred with the work to this fleet.

AEC Routemaster 2 (VLT 163) had returned to the Mac Tours fleet by November.

EVE Coaches, Dunbar
Plaxton Cheetah C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SJ51 GCV had joined this fleet by November ex-Gibson, Renfrew.

Fairline, Glasgow
Further to the October issue, the Mercedes-Benz M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz 311Cdi new in July is registered SF05 BEJ.

Below: Allan & Black G369 RTO, an ex-Nottingham City Transport Scania N113DRB with Alexander RH-type body, on a school journey in its home village of Aboyne last April. IAIN SMART

SCOTTISH COLUMN

SANDY MACDONALD

Edinburgh tram integration plans raise fears of bus cuts over the busiest city corridors

Fears have been raised about the number of bus services that could be withdrawn if Edinburgh's multi-million pound tram project goes ahead.

Transport Initiatives Edinburgh (TIE) — the council-owned company with responsibility for reintroducing trams — has confirmed that some city centre bus services would need to be cut, but it is unable to say which routes or how many would be affected.

A new body, Transport Edinburgh Ltd (Tel) — made up of Edinburgh City Council, council-owned Lothian Buses and TIE has been set up to oversee the integration of trams and buses in the Scottish capital. Tel will make the final decision on changes to the bus network. Cuts are likely on Lothian Buses' most profitable city centre routes to accommodate the two proposed tram lines, while services in outlying areas — where there are fewer passengers — could be expanded.

Transport leaders in Edinburgh have pledged that buses and trams will not compete directly with each other, the assumption being that bus routes will need to be reduced in order to make the tram system viable.

TIE submitted detailed proposals to the Scottish Parliament two years ago, outlining 13 major bus service changes. That report said it would be necessary to withdraw Lothian services 22 and 35 between Ocean Terminal and the city centre, and services 10 and 42 from the north of Edinburgh to Princes Street. The report estimated there would be a 45% reduction in the number of buses on Leith Walk, a 14% reduction on Easter Road and 15% on Inverleith Road.

TIE has since backtracked on these measures, and following intense pressure from residents, has promised to that no bus services around the Western General Hospital would be reduced. TIE says all the changes put forward in the report are being reviewed. The integration work is continuing and while it is too early to provide the detail, it envisages additional or new bus services being provided to create a joined-up bus and tram network.

OFT investigates Citylink/Stagecoach merger as contractors lose work

The Office of Fair Trading is considering referring the new Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture to the Competition Commission. This news broke as it also emerged that some of Citylink's established contractors have lost their work on the network when the first phases of the combined timetable were implemented in November.

The OFT is seeking comments on the effects of the joint venture. It is examining whether the arrangement, in which Stagecoach took a 35% stake in Citylink in exchange for the transfer of certain rights to its Motorvator and Megabus.com operations, constitutes a merger. If the deal is deemed to be a 'merger situation', it will consider referring the deal to the Competition Commission.

From 21 November, the two operators' 20min Edinburgh-Glasgow service 900 operations were replaced by a 15min combined service (every 10min in the peaks) operated by Stagecoach Glasgow and Park's of Hamilton. Park's half-hourly journeys call at Baillieston (as Stagecoach's Motorvator service did before).

From 28 November, the Glasgow/Edinburgh-Aberdeen/Inverness corridors' facilities were merged into a new timetable with services M8 (Glasgow-Dundee), M9 (Glasgow-Aberdeen), M10 (Glasgow-Inverness), M90/M91 (Edinburgh-Inverness). Together, they provide journeys roughly every half-hour, at least, on the Glasgow-Perth and Edinburgh-Perth sections. Some journeys serve Perth bus station, but others use the Broxden park-&-ride site on the outskirts. Journeys are operated by vehicles in either Citylink or Megabus livery.

Among the established Citylink contractors to lose work, National Express-owned Travel Dundee has lost everything, while West Coast Motors has a reduced involvement. A new operator to Citylink work is the oddly named (given its easterly location) West Coast Coaches Ltd of Kirkcaldy. This relatively new company, authorised to run up to four vehicles, has taken over operation of Citylink service 914 (Glasgow-Fort William), provided previously by Rapsons Coaches.

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
DG Comfort DelGro
FG FirstGroup
LB Lothian Buses
NX National Express Group
RN Rapsons
ST Stagecoach Group
YT Traction Group

First Aberdeen FG

Alexander ALX300-bodied Volvo B10BLEs 62172/4 have been given First Coach livery for use on the park-&-ride service.

Mairs Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-61 20025 (ESK 957, *F104 HSO*) was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in September.

First Edinburgh FG

Wright Solar B43F-bodied L94UB 61226 (YM52 UWB) was transferred from the First London-managed rail replacement fleet in August and entered service from Dalkeith depot. Plaxton C44Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 20438 (M413 DEU) and Leyland Lynx LX2R11C15Z4R driver trainer 62711 (G111 HNP) had arrived from First Devon & Cornwall and First Wyvern respectively by October.

Further to previous reports, recently delivered Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs 32669-83 are H45/29F; TransBus Enviro300 62411 (SN03 WMJ) is B44F; and Wright-bodied Scania L94UBs 65716-23 (SN54 KEJ/K/U, KFA/C-F) are B43F.

Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 40957 (S372 SUX, *HY 9565*) was transferred to First Devon & Cornwall in August, and Plaxton Expressliner 2-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA 62377 (N471 KHU, *A12 SMT, N471 KHU*) passed to First Cymru in September.

Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ 22012 (F612 RBX) and similar Plaxton-bodied TRCL10/3ARZM 22014 (F614 RBX, *5210 DD, F614 RBX*) were sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall around September.

First Glasgow FG

Wright Liberator-bodied Volvo B10Ls 60350-2 (N557-9 BNF) were transferred to this fleet from First Manchester in September, 60352 entering service from Parkhead depot in October.

Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents 32820/3/4/6/36/7 (T820/3/4/6/36/7 LLC) have local fleetnumbers DT1, 3, 4, 6, 16/7.

Volvo Citybus 31315 [AH65] is another example of this type to be given the mainly green allover vinyl advertising livery for Egg Finance, but with fleet colours retained on the front.

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 40821/41/3/4 [MD100, 97-9] (R641/78 DUS, R758/9 DYS) were transferred to First Yorkshire in October, with similar 40822-7 [MD101-6] (R642-7 DUS) moving to First Hampshire & Dorset at the same time.

The service enhancements funded by Bus Route Development Grant were started at the end of October, under contract to Strathclyde Passenger Transport. They comprise diversion of 19 through Townhead; extension of 38/A from Glasgow Fort to Gartcosh station; daily night service journeys on 20 (City Centre-Cathkin), 38/A (City Centre-Garthamlock), 61 (City Centre-Sandyhills), 75 (City Centre-Milton), 88 (Buchanan bus station-Harestanes); weekend night services on 44/A (City Centre-Eaglesham); and new, daily night service 123 (City Centre-Glasgow Airport via Govan and Renfrew).

Other service changes at that time included withdrawal of 24 (Govan-Mosspark) and 49 (Govan-South Nitshill). New SPT services started then comprised 7 (Rutherglen-Osborne Street, evenings), 327 (Kirkintilloch-Twechar, evenings) and 384 (Twechar-Kilsyth, daytime), with 129 (Mansewood-City Centre, evenings and Sundays) and 146 (Castlemilk-Greenfield, evenings) following on 6 November. They all replace commercial journeys that the company had withdrawn.

Below: First Edinburgh 62708 (G108 HNP), a Leyland Lynx transferred from First Wyvern for use as a driver trainer, in Galashiels bus station. DANIEL STAZICKER

First Stop, Renfrew

To correct last month's issue, Optare MetroRider MR15 L735 PUA was acquired from McGill, Greenock in October. Similar L732 MWW and L741 PUA were also acquired from McGill, Port Glasgow in October.

Following acquisition in September by the MacPherson family, which is involved in the Slaemuir Coaches business, this company is undergoing a period of change at present although it will continue to trade as First Stop Travel.

It would appear that the livery is being changed to allover white with red fleetnames, in lieu of the previous white with red skirt and yellow shaded lettering. Early recipients included Dennis Darts J952 MFT (already reported), K366 RTY and MetroRiders L732 MWW, L735/41 PUA.

After only a year in the fleet, rare Marshall Minibuses R102/3 VLX were withdrawn by October, the latter having seen little use since its purchase.

Cymric-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D CV02 KFX was sold to Slaemuir, Port Glasgow in October. Plaxton B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D K234 SFJ had passed to Dunn, Port Glasgow by November.

Service 122 (Paisley, Stow Brae-Braehead Shopping Centre) was cancelled from 15 December.

Fitzcharles, Grangemouth

Plaxton DP24FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D P608 NJN was acquired in August ex-Collison, Stonehouse.

Gibson, Renfrew

Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SJ51 GCV had passed to EVE Coaches, Dunbar by November.

Glasgow Citybus
With the opening of the new Bearsden Asda store in November, temporary contract services 5 (Bearsden-Govan Asda) and 6 (Bearsden-Maryhill Asda) were withdrawn.

Hall, Kennoway
Made to Measure C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D G185 XHU was acquired in October ex-Mayne, Buckie.

Harlequin, Dunblane
Wadham Stringer B70F-bodied Dennis Javelin P994 VOS joined this fleet in September ex-Collison, Stonehouse. It was previously registered P944 VOS but its original identity is not known.

Henderson, Hamilton
Commercial service 72 (East Kilbride-Halfway) is to be cancelled from 16 January.

Houston, Lockerbie
Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz 611D P523 UGA was sold to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow in February.

Irvine, Salsburgh
MCW H43/30F-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102 GOG 208W was acquired in August ex-Metroline Travel (Thorpe) M208.

Jamieson, Cullivoe
Coachliners-bodied Ford Transit T955 MBU passed to McBlain, Bo'ness in June.

Lochs, Leurbost
Plaxton C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N760 AHP (*95 D 41601*) joined this fleet in August 2004, having previously been with Silverdale, New Stevenston.

Lothian LB
New Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs 716/8-21 (SN55 BKZ, BLJ/K/V/X) had been put to work on service 3/A by November. Similar 722/3/5 (SN55 BLZ, BMO/V) in standard harlequin livery and 727-30/2-4 (SN55 BMZ, BNA/B/D/F/J/K) in service 44 livery had also entered service by then.

Dennis Darts 195/8 and Leyland Olympian 333 have been transferred to Mac Tours. Operation of the City Sightseeing Edinburgh Tour has been transferred to Edinburgh Tours, together with Dennis Tridents 31-4 and Leyland Olympians 304-11, which work on it.

East Lancs-bodied Scania N94UD OmniDekka demonstrator 999 (SN04 CPE) was returned to Scania (dealer), Newbridge by early November after the end of its loan period.

Service changes from 20 November included extending 17 from Granton to Drylaw via the new Waterfront development, Scottish Gas headquarters and Muirhouse; extending 20 from Balgreen to Slateford via Balgreen Road, Gorgie Road and Chesser Avenue to create a circular service; extending 35 all day from Sighthill to Edinburgh Airport via South Gyle, Royal Bank of Scotland headquarters and Ingliston park-&-ride; and extending 36 from Charlotte Square to the Scottish Parliament via Princes Street, Waverley Bridge, Jeffrey Street and Holyrood Road. This company was highly commended as one of country's best bus operators at this year's UK Bus Awards in London on 17 November.

McCall, Lockerbie
Plaxton C49F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3F/4R PNW 342W (*890 TTE, PNW 342W*) joined this fleet over a year ago from Titterington, Blencow.

MacCuish, Lochmaddy
Plaxton B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D FNZ 7791 (*K887 UDB*) had arrived by August ex-Pickford, Chippenham. LDV M16-bodied LDV Convoy W916 XGH had also been acquired by then.

MacDonald, Carloway
DAF 400 J464 TSG had left this Lewis operator by July.

MacDonald, West Gernish
Plaxton C53F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3F/5R RLJ 88X had moved to this fleet from Buchanan, Liniclate by August.

MacEwan, Amisfield
Minibus Options DP14FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614Ds T131/6 ARE were taken into stock in August ex-D&G, Kingstone 90/5.

McGill, Greenock
Former Harte, Greenock Dennis Dart SLFs IIB 1618, 7633 reverted to their original registrations T52/3 JBA in September when the cherished marks were returned to Harte.

To correct last month's issue, Optare MetroRider MR15 L735 PUA passed to First Stop, Renfrew in October, when First Stop also acquired similar L732 MWW and L741 PUA.

McKindless, Wishaw
Plaxton Interurban C47F-bodied Dennis Javelin 11SDLs L141 BFV, L101 SDY were acquired in October ex-Harrogate & District 141 and Keighley & District 162 respectively, and entered service in McKindless Express livery. Alexander ALX200 B35F-bodied Volvo B6LEs P336/40 JND (new to Stagecoach Manchester) were also acquired around that time ex-Burnley & Pendle 201/5, and have entered service from Newmains depot.

MacPhail, Larkhall
Alexander MacPhail, trading as Alexander Travel, was due to start service 3 (Strathaven-East Kilbride bus station) on 15 December, in competition with the existing Henderson Travel service 13 between these points, but additionally serving the Kype View and Overton Road areas of Strathaven.

Mac Tours, Edinburgh LB
Further to last month's issue, Dennis Darts 195/8 have been transferred to this fleet from Lothian Buses and are repainted into full Mac Tours colours for use on former Waverley Travel service 67 (Waterloo Place-Westside Plaza); similar 196 is in Edinburgh Castle Shuttle livery with Mac Tours front.

AEC Routemaster 2 and Leyland Olympian 333 have also been transferred to this fleet from Edinburgh Tours and Lothian Buses respectively. The Routemaster is expected to be given Mac Tours red and cream and the Olympian is being converted to partial open-top layout and will be used as a Majestic Tour bus.

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 28/9 (XIL 1484/5; *G268 TSL, G665 PHH*) were given back their original registrations in October.

Mayne, Buckie
The new Marcopolo Viaggio II 330 C70F-bodied MAN 18.310 displayed at Coach & Bus Live is being stored until March, and four Van Hool Alizée T9-bodied Volvo B12B coaches have been ordered for delivery at that time.

New owners for coaches sold around October comprise Hall, Kennoway (Made to Measure-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D G185 XHU); Lees, Lumphannan (Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D MM52 GSM); Milne, New Byth (Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B12B GM03 GSM); and Yorkshire Rose, Barnsley (Bova Futura FHD12-340 HM02 GSM).

Milne, New Byth
SV55 AAE, a Plaxton Cheetah C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D, was new in September, and Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B12B GM03 GSM arrived in October ex-Mayne, Buckie.

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S14 AMC, Ford Transit N27 HKH and Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 MIL 2430 (*K992 OHS*) all passed to Victoria, Peterhead in August 2004, last March and last September respectively.

Mitchell, Plean
Wadham Stringer C47F-bodied Dennis Javelin 10SDA N357 CVP (*ES 06 AA*) was acquired in September ex-Red Lion, Blantyre.

Beulas-bodied Iveco EuroRider 391E.12.35 R507 SCH (*UAF 780, R507 SCH*) passed to McLean, Harthill in August.

Moffat & Williamson, Gauldry
Crystals-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D R64 OTY was acquired by Turner, Park Street by August and Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D X937 MSP passed to Fraser, Duncanston via Plaxton (dealer), Anston in October.

Morrin, Glasgow
Alexander (Belfast) B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M771 TFS and similar DP25F-bodied M318 RSO were acquired in October ex-Stagecoach Fife 40071, 40588. Optare MetroRider L733 MWW was sold to DB Travel, Dumbarton at that time.

Munro, Jedburgh
B43F-bodied Optare Tempo demonstrator YJ55 BLX arrived on 9 November for a week and was used on service 29/30 (Edinburgh-Jedburgh/Kelso).

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3ARZ ESK 847 (*E375 HSH*) reverted to its original registration by August when it was sold to Arriva (dealer), Gomersal together with similar Duple-bodied G794 RNC.

Nicoll, Laurencekirk
Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61s E173 FRA (*UXI 476, JBZ 551, E311 OPR*) and E996 FRA (*BHZ 122, UXI 551, E310 OPR*) were added to this fleet in September ex-Sharpe, Scarrington.

Park, Hamilton
Ten 12.8m Plaxton-bodied Volvo B12M coaches have been ordered.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12Ms HSK 654, KSK 949/54/80, 2 WR, 2 HAN, 3 HWS, 2, 3, 15 RWM, HSK 656/9, KSK 948/76-9, LSK 483, LSK 509 (*12 HM, 2 HW*) were re-registered SG03 ZEK-M/P/R-Z, ZHS, ZJA-D/H respectively in September.

Perryman, Burnmouth
A Wright Eclipse Commuter-bodied Volvo B7RLE demonstrator was noted on trial on service 253 (Edinburgh-Berwick) on 8 November.

Left: Contrasting with the half-yellow example shown last month, Lothian Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TL 732 (SN55 BNF) displays the half-black diamond branding for route 44.
KEITH McGILLIVRAY

Petrie, Forfar
Angus Council's Tuesday and Thursday service 119 (Forfar-Bogindullo) was cancelled from 19 December.

Rowe, Muirkirk
Further to last month's issue, Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62s YBZ 4427 and CJZ 9222 were previously registered M309/36 KRY respectively.

Royal Mail
Postbus service 101 (Drumnadrochit-Groataig/Achtemarack) has been cancelled from 31 December.

Scotguide, Glasgow
The recently applied black livery on MCW Metrobus A983 SYF advertises Celtic Connections 2006.

Silverdale, New Stevenston
A notable development with this operator is the replacement of the Optare Solos in the fleet by new, non-low floor buses fitted with a lift. Plaxton Beaver DP29FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SF55 PSY was new in October, and Solo M850s MX54 KXU, KYN were sold then to Stuart, Carluke.

Simpson, Rosehearty
Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 UAF 780 (*N83 LSE, HSK 816, N83 LSE*) was sold to Martin, Uphall in September.

Slaemuir, Greenock
Cymric B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D CV02 KFX joined this fleet in October from First Stop Travel, Renfrew. It has been given coach seating and repainted allover white with Slaemuir fleetnames.

Spa, Strathpeffer
Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-55 Y291 RSO was acquired in October ex-Whyte, Newmachar.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST
New Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 34731-40 (SV55 BZF-H/J/L-N, CCK/N/O) arrived in October, with 34738-40 allocated to Peterhead depot. Optare Solo M850s 47217-27 (SV55 BZX/Y/B-E, CCA/D/G/F/J) were new in October and have been allocated to Perth depot.

Other recent additions comprise Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50s 15269/76 (C807/6 USG) ex-Stagecoach Fife in September; Alexander PS B51F-bodied Scania N113CRB 28918/26 (F918 JRG, G926 TCU) and similar B53F-bodied 28927 (G113 SKX) ex-Stagecoach Busways in October. 15276 has been allocated to Aberdeen.

Further to the August and October issues, former Hong Kong Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian 13624 was registered TSU 638 (*H987 RKG, ES 3771*) when it arrived from Stagecoach Wales in April. Similar 13625 (H511 FRP, *ES 4877*) arrived from Stagecoach Warwickshire in July but returned there in August.

Volvo Citybus 15297 was received from Stagecoach Fife in Deep Sea World allover livery. Leyland Titan 10562, Leyland Olympian 14608, Volvo B10M-55s 20407/8, and Scania N113CRB 28927 are allover yellow.

East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dominator DDA1016 15046 (F146 BKH) was transferred to Stagecoach Glasgow in October. Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 13629 (H495 LNA, *ET 1848*), 13631 (H492 LNA, *ET 1989*), 13640 (G283 YRJ, *EF 6118*), 13646 (H463 EJR, *ET 2205*), 13652 (H462 EJR, *ET 1746*); Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50s 30267/8 (L267/8 CCK), 30800 (M510 FWV, *400 DCD, M490 BFG*); and Alexander Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40197 (G197 PAO) had also gone by October.

Stagecoach Fife ST
B38F-seated Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart 34730 (SP05 ELJ) was new in July but has escaped mention until now. Similar 34725-9 are also B38F. New Optare Solos 47228-34 are M850s, as are earlier deliveries 47167-9/78/9/83, which are also B27F. 47229 entered service from Dunfermline depot in November.

With reference to previous reports, Volvo Olympians 16098, 16101/7/8 are H45/27F ex-H45/23D; 16054 is H51/32F ex-H51/28D; 16155/8/60 are H49/31F ex-H49/30F; and 16413-5 are H45/29F ex-H45/27F.

ECW H42/29F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RHs 26441/6 (D123/8 FYM) joined this fleet from Stagecoach Warwickshire in April. It was originally intended that they would be converted for charity use but this did not happen and they passed to Stagecoach Bluebird in July without the conversion taking place. This company used neither bus.

Plaxton C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52285 (N145 XSA) was transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Western in October.

Alexander-bodied Volvo B10M-55 20318 is in an allover yellow livery for Kingdom FM radio.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 15274 (C804 USG) was transferred to Stagecoach Glasgow in October, similar 15269/76 (C807/6 USG) passed to Stagecoach Bluebird in September and 15271/93 (C801, 793 USG) were sold to Collison, Stonehouse at that time. Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40070 (M770 TFS) left the fleet in October.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST
Two more buses transferred to this fleet in October were East Lancs H45/31F-bodied Dennis Dominator DDA1016 15046 (F146 BKH) from Stagecoach Bluebird and Alexander H47/37F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 15274 (C804 USG) from Stagecoach Fife.

Several more Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350s repainted into blue and yellow Scottish Citylink livery include 50036/52/66.

Jonckheere Mistral 35-bodied Volvo B10MA-55 articulated coach 51062 (VCS 391, *N562 SJF*) was transferred to Stagecoach Western in October without being used.

Stagecoach Western ST
The two wheelchair-accessible Wright Eclipse Commuter-bodied Volvo B7RLEs for Dumfries & Galloway Council supported service 500 (Dumfries-Stranraer) were due to be launched on 14 December.

Jonckheere Mistral 35-bodied Volvo B10MA-55 articulated coach 51062 (VCS 391, *N562 SJF*) was returned to this company by Stagecoach Glasgow in October.

Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 52348/9 were given red and white Motorvator livery in June.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52285 (N145 XSA) was transferred to Stagecoach Fife in October.

Stagecoach West Scotland was named UK Bus Operator of the Year in the annual awards announced in November.

Strathtay YT
East Lancs-bodied Scania N94UD OmniDekka demonstrator YN54 OBX was on loan from Scania (dealer), Worksop in July and was used initially at Blairgowrie then at Dundee.

Alexander TE-bodied Leyland Tiger 411 has had a blue rear added to its coach livery.

Renault Master 185 (K260 JSN), MCW Metrorider MF154/12 213 (E186 BNS), Alexander-bodied Leyland Tiger TRBTL11/2Rs 502/3 (A113/4 ESA) and ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R 932 (SHE 612Y) had gone by October.

Stuart, Carluke
B29F-seated TransBus Mini Pointer Dart SJ04 DZY was new in August 2004 but has not been reported until now.

More recent acquisitions comprise Plaxton Beaver B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N208 CKP ex-Collison, Stonehouse in August; similar B25F-bodied M975 WES and Reeve Burgess B25F-bodied H11 JYM (*H907 SHL*), both ex-Moffat & Williamson, Gauldry in September; Jonckheere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 JCZ 2065 (*K617 SBV*) ex-Regal Coaches, Edinburgh in September; East Lancs H47/38F-bodied

continued overleaf...

Travel Dundee 59 (P521 EJW), one of the ex-Travel West Midlands Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusader midibuses given X-City branding. Strathtay has applied similar branding to its latest Optare Solos. DEREK SIMPSON

Volvo Citybus B10M-50 E324 BVO ex-Nottingham 324 in October; and B24F-seated Optare Solo M880s MX54 KXU, KYN ex-Silverdale, New Stevenston in October.

The days of the Mini Pointer Dart in this fleet appear to be numbered with the sale of X703 UKS to Walsh, Middleton in August and X702/6 UKS, DE51 EWJ, SL02 GYD/E to D&G, Kingstone in September.

Thomson, Glasgow

Plaxton C44Ft-bodied Dennis Dorchester SDA801/112 HUI 4553 (*HNE 262Y, WSV 551, BUT 23Y*) — new to Leicester City Transport — was acquired by this operator in June ex-Sturgess, Hayes.

Travel Dundee NX

Northern Counties Palatine II-bodied Volvo Olympian TC26 (R92 GTM) was re-registered USU 662 and repainted into purple Travel Greyhound livery in September.

In October, Wright Crusader-bodied Volvo B6LEs 59-63 had 'X City Direct' route branding applied, with their white areas under the windscreen, around the side windows and at the rear painted light blue.

Scottish Citylink work ceased after 27 November as a result of the reorganisation of services (see Scottish Column).

Alexander AM-bodied Dodge S56 D702 EES, new in 1987 as Tayside Buses 202 and originally named 'Korky the Cat', was sold in August by Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow for preservation in Glasgow.

Victoria, Peterhead

Plaxton C32F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S14 AMC, Ford Transit M14-bodied N27 HKH and Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 MIL 2430 (*K992 OHS*) were acquired from Milne, New Byth in August 2004, last March and last September respectively.

Wait, Chirnside

Plaxton DP25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D FHZ 8393 (*L877 TFB*) was acquired from Swan, Berwick in August.

Dormobile-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L233 HRF passed to Pickford, Chippenham in October.

Watermill, Fraserburgh

PMT-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D E911 AFM and Pearl-bodied Ford Transit TIB 5004 were re-registered E387 FSO and K810 JSA respectively in September.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R ASD 31T and Dennis Dominator DD137B TYS 270W were sold in July and October respectively to an equestrian centre in Newburgh. Reeve Burgess Harrier-bodied Leyland Swift LBM6T/2RA G247 XLO (*A2 YOU, G247 XLO*) was scrapped on site in August and Marshall-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L259 VSU was sold for scrap to Overton (dealer), Dyce in September. Similar Mercedes-Benz 709D K593 BEG was sold to Dunn, Port Glasgow in August and Dormobile-bodied 709D K209 OHS passed to Dallas, Penicuik in September.

Wave, Stirling

Mellor M16L-bodied Iveco 50C11 X992 NBU was acquired ex-TLS, Salford in December 2004, and Plaxton C41F-bodied Bedford YMP TJI 2806 (*D95 ALR*) had also arrived by August ex-Smith, Dalkeith.

Waverley, Edinburgh

The current fleet appears to comprise MAN SR280 MVS 380 (*700 CPO*); Carlyle 'Zig-Zag'-bodied Dennis Dart RIB 7002 (*H403 HOY, CMN 12A*); Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D V474 FSF; Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts X185 BNH, KX03 HZK; TransBus Mini Pointer Dart SN03 LGA; Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts KX54 HKZ, SN54 FCE/F; and BMC 850 Probus BU05 EGD.

West Coast Coaches, Kirkcaldy

The normal vehicle used on Scottish Citylink service 914 (Glasgow-Fort William) is N8 BUS, a Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M of which previous details are not known.

Western Isles Council

Further to the October issue, Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D YN54 XYK has Plaxton DP33F bodywork.

Whyte, Newmachar

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-55 Y291 RSO passed to Spa, Strathpeffer via Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in October.

Woods, Tillicoultry

Optare Solera-bodied Mercedes-Benz 1223L FY52 NSV was sold to Optare (dealer), Hellaby in April.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Dumfries & Galloway Council, First Glasgow, Lothian Buses, Mayne's Coaches, R. Newman, B. Nicol, PSV Circle, renfrewshirebus@yahoogroups.com, J. Sinclair, D. Stewart, scotlandbus@yahoogroups.com, Stagecoach Bluebird, sescotbus@yahoogroups.com, Stagecoach Glasgow, Stagecoach Western, R. Walter, and the Western Enthusiasts Club have supplied news this month. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Slaemuir Coaches Ltd
BASED:	Dellingburn Street, Greenock, Inverclyde
FOUNDED:	By Sammy McPherson of Port Glasgow after deregulation in 1986. His first Slaemuir Coaches local service began in January 1988 — hourly between Greenock and Kilmacolm via Port Glasgow and Slaemuir, competing with the parallel Clydeside 2000 service. He added more journeys, including evenings and Sundays, when Clydeside cut back in 1992, giving Slaemuir a near monopoly between Greenock and Kilmacolm. Other local services were operated between Greenock and Port Glasgow by 1994, but significant growth through acquisition began in March 2000 when brothers Billy (Newark Coaches) and Steven Hughes (Roadrunner) were taken over, including eight buses and their joint Leven Road route in Greenock. Slaemuir took over the nearby Clynder Road service of JM Coaches in June 2001. In January 2002, the partners running Greenock-based Avondale Coaches split up the business; one partner moved his operation to Clydebank but Tommy McIntyre joined McPherson and a new, enlarged Slaemuir Coaches Ltd was formed with around 30 vehicles. Rationalisation saw routes in Greenock given up to others in 2002 while consolidation took place on the busy Greenock-Port Glasgow corridor. In November 2002, the merger with George Findlay's Astrascreen Ltd, which traded as Comet Coaches, and acquisition of the Clarke, Port Glasgow operations made Slaemuir the principal provider of bus services in Port Glasgow. Astrascreen still has a separate licence, but trades as Slaemuir. Operation of Strathclyde Passenger Transport tendered local services began in March 2003 and these were followed a year later by SPT Dial-a-Bus. Further growth in 2005 saw the company replace First Glasgow's Kilmacolm-Glasgow motorway express service and acquire the old-established Port Glasgow business of Pride of the Clyde Coaches.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Local services in Greenock, Port Glasgow, Kilmacolm, Bishopton, Erskine, and between Glasgow and Kilmacolm.
LIVERY:	Initially dark blue and grey, but changed to dark blue and white in 2002.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	38 allowed, plus another 12 on the Astrascreen licence and 20 on the Pride of the Clyde licence.
MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?:	Nothing particularly unusual. Ford and Iveco minibuses were used in the early days among many varied Mercedes-Benz vehicles, which were the norm. The first low-floor buses — two secondhand Mini Pointer Darts — arrived in 2002, new ones following later that year. Plaxton-bodied Volvo coaches appeared first in 2003 for hires and contracts, together with full-size Darts, and SPT-liveried Optare Solos joined the fleet in 2004.

Below: Slaemuir M123 YCM, an Alexander Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D acquired from Arriva North West, and a Mini Pointer Dart in Greenock bus station in June 2003. JOHN YOUNG

Below: M351 MRU, a Plaxton Premiere 320-bodied Volvo B10M, at Gourock railway station in July 2003. MURDOCH CURRIE

Where to send your Irish news reports

Reports on Northern Ireland operators, please, to:
G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue, Belfast, BT6 9RG.

Reports on Irish Republic operators, please, to:
Ian Molloy, Willow Grove, Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin,
or by e-mail to: **ntpa@eircom.net.**

MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

Further new Scania K94/Irizar Intercentury C53F Goldline Express coaches are 1716/7/9-33/5 (EEZ 6716 etc) at Londonderry (1716/22/9), Dungannon (1717/26/8), Newry (1719-21/31), Downpatrick (1723), Great Victoria Street (1724/32), Enniskillen (1725), Coleraine (1727), Craigavon (1730), Ballymena (1733) and Omagh (1735).

Optare Solo SL920 SlimLine/B31F delivered are 1912-4 (DEZ 8912-4) at Coleraine (1912) and Craigavon (1913/4). Further Solo SL850 SlimLine/B27F are 1924-9 (ROI 134/45/26, BXI 337/28, ROI 129) at Bangor (1924/5), Larne (1926/7) and Coleraine (1928/9). Despite the re-use of old registrations, these have matching last digits of their fleet and registration numbers.

Transferred in from Metro are Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-types 1459/62 (YXI 1459/62), 2639-43/5-60 (SXI 2639 etc) and 2661/7/8/70/3-5 (VXI 2661 etc) and Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultra prototype 2700 (HAZ 4809) and production vehicles 2737/41/2/4/6/7 (LAZ 2737 etc). The Tigers are dispersed around many depots, the Ultras to Craigavon and Londonderry. Although Derry City received a batch from new, these are the first of the type (which was unpopular with Citybus engineers) to be cascaded between the companies. Perhaps they will be regarded as belated replacements for the once large allocation of Bristol RELLs at Craigavon.

All of the MkIV Goldliners — originally a batch of 80 Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere coaches dating from 1994-96 — are to be reseated to B69F and repainted in bus livery. First so treated was 1569 (DAZ 1569). Similar 1551 (DAZ 1551) is delicensed with accident damage.

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybuses 601 (CAZ 6641) and 602/3/9/13/9/21 (CAZ 6602 etc) have been delicensed and placed in reserve, 610/2 (CAZ 6610/2) have been sold to Dumfries & Galloway Council's DGC Buses fleet and 618 (CAZ 6618) to Lough Swilly.

More Leyland Leopard/Alexander delicensed and placed in reserve are 225 (WOI 2225), 2272 (YOI 2272), 2280/1/9/97/8 (AXI 280 etc), 2302 (XOI 2302), 2312/5/7-9 (AXI 312 etc), 2320/2/3/8 (BXI 320 etc); 2289 is re-registered FEZ 5365. Similar 194 (VOI 194), 295, 314 (AXI 295, 314) are confirmed withdrawn, 314 — which has been re-registered FEZ 5461 — with a seized engine, the others with accident damage. Leopards 126/31/4/5 (ROI 126 etc) have been re-registered FEZ 8166, 5575, 8165/4 respectively, so their registrations and those of 314 and 2289 mentioned above can be retained for future use.

Mercedes-Benz 711D/Alexander 901-3/7 (JAZ 3901-3/7) are delicensed and placed in reserve, but similar 899 (JAZ 3899) and Mercedes 811D/Wright TS 1813 (AAZ 6813) — the back-up vehicle for the Causeway Coaster service — are reinstated. Of these, 1813 was uniquely modified with a Paris-style open rear platform. It was seldom used as such, remaining screened with plastic curtains even in the best weather. The Giants Causeway terminal was built specially for the 811Ds and could not accommodate 2.5m wide Optare Solos, but may have sufficient space for the new SlimLine Solos.

DAF MB230/Plaxton Paramount 677 (SXI 1677), rejected and returned by Lough Swilly, has been pressed back into service at Enniskillen following engineering problems.

Further Leyland Tiger/Alexander TE-types transferred to the driving school include 514/9/26/8 (PXI 5514 etc).

Metro

Another 20 Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 double-deckers here are 2887/8/91-908 (EEZ 2887 etc).

Transferred to Ulsterbus are Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-types 1459/62 (YXI 1459/62), 2639-43/5-60 (SXI 2639 etc) and 2661/7/8/70/3-5 (VXI 2661 etc) and Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultra prototype 2700 (HAZ 4809) and production vehicles 2737/41/2/4/6/7 (LAZ 2737 etc).

Flexibus

More former Ulsterbus Airbus vehicles delicensed and placed in reserve are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright TS 'fast front' 1812 (AAZ 6812) and Optare MetroRiders 1815/7/8 (JAZ 1815 etc).

Dublin Bus

Volvo B9TL/Alexander Dennis Enviro500 tri-axles VT1-20 were expected imminently at Donnybrook as we closed for press in late-November. As part of Transport 21, a 10-year strategic transport plan unveiled by transport minister Martin Cullen on 1 November, these will be extra vehicles for the fleet and the depot's remaining RH-class Leyland Olympians will remain in service well into 2006. The B9TLs will displace Volvo Olympians RV550-69 to Harristown, which has spare capacity — in this case for 'Euro' duties. Previously stored Olympians RH155/7/8 ex-Clontarf have returned to service at Donnybrook to cover for the transfer of Volvo B6BLE midibuses WV4-7 to Harristown, where they will replace Mercedes-Benz Varios MV60/2/5/8, 76, 83.

We are reliably informed that the Volvo B7TLs on order will be numbered A**X**449-548 and that Euro3-engined B7TLs AV283-448 will also be reclassified AX.

With effect from 13 November, route 18 was extended from Sandymount Green to St John's Church, Sandymount (the former route 3 terminus and also a route 18 extension on summer Sundays). After 18.30, it also diverts away from Kylemore Road into Killeen Road in Ballyfermot.

Bus Éireann

A significant initiative from 7 November saw the company begin to work in conjunction with former direct competitor McGeehan Coaches of Fintown, Co. Donegal. Express departures on service 30 (Donegal Town-Dublin via Cavan) and local services 490 (Glencolmcille) and 492 (Dungloe) are worked jointly using both operators' coaches — McGeehan using new Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragons including 05 D 47099, 49348 and 04 D 59533. McGeehan coaches now serve Dublin's Bus Aras (bus station) and have Bus Éireann Wayfarer ticket machines. Dungloe lies within Lough Swilly operating territory and was not previously reached by Bus Éireann scheduled services. The same applies to Pettigo (confined to pilgrimage workings of services 31 and 68 to Lough Derg). These arrangements add many new direct and indirect connections. McGeehan also operates a scheduled stage carriage service between Glencolmcille and Letterkenny via Killybegs and Fintown.

On 2 November, Volvo B6BLE/Wright Crusader 2 VWM4 (00 C 30274) was destroyed by fire (not thought to be malicious) while working Cork outer-city service 222. As reported at the time, similar VWM1 (00 C 28892) was destroyed over a year ago.

Vehicles confirmed withdrawn include GAC Rural Buses KS11/8, 111 (EZV 11/8, 111) and KS150/64 (PZV 150/64) and Van Hool T815A Acron coaches CVS28/9 (SI 2028/9), leaving CVS3-5, 10/2/6, 25, 30 and EVS7, 14 still in service. Previously withdrawn T815H Acron EVS5 (SI 3005) took part recently in a simulated bus accident rescue training exercise on the N17 road near Curry, Co. Sligo.9 (PZV 136/9), KS199 (XZV 199) and KS211 (87 D 2211).

OTHER OPERATORS

Citylink DG

Confirmed Scania K-series/Irizar PB coaches include 05 G 8885/6/9-91. All are deployed on the extremely competitive services linking Galway and Dublin.

Lough Swilly

Another Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus from Ulsterbus is CAZ 6618. Similar CAZ 6605 is numbered 488 and repainted in white/green/red livery. Leyland Tigers 485/7 are allover white.

MacDiarmada, Tallaght

This operator recently acquired Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH-type 90 D 1058 (former Dublin Bus RH58) from Dualway, Rathcoole — the sole example that Dualway had not converted to open top.

Morton, Rathfarnham

A new addition is Wright-bodied Volvo single-decker 05 D 33070, which presumably is an Eclipse Urban-bodied B7RLE.

Probus, Kenmare

This company, which provides part of the Aircoach service between Dublin and Cork, has begun licensed stage carriage services within south Kerry. There are five daily departures between Kenmare and Killarney via Kilgarvan (at least some of these, e.g. the 05.30 ex-Kenmare, connect with Dublin trains). These extend three times daily to and from Sneem on the renowned Ring of Kerry tourist trail. Most demand is likely to be in the summer months.

Left: McGeehan, Fintown 04 D 59533, a Plaxton Paragon-bodied Volvo B12M with joint fleetnames for the new combined services operated with Bus Éireann between Donegal and Dublin. DARREN HALL

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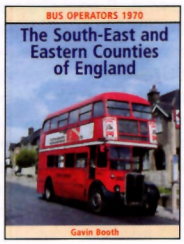
BUS OPERATORS 1970: THE SOUTH-EAST AND EASTERN COUNTIES OF ENGLAND

GAVIN BOOTH, IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING, ISBN 0 7110 3032 4, 297MM x 210MM, 80pp, HARDBACK, £16.99



The 1968 Transport Act brought about the National Bus Company and the PTEs and hastened the introduction of one-person operation. The British bus scene changed irrevocably. It took a year or two to make itself felt, so this snapshot of 1970 is fascinating.

Buses of the shoebox tendency rubbed shoulders with stylish tradition. Brave new London Transport and London Country AEC Swifts appear on the same pages as RTs, for example. There were 10 municipalities in the south-east and East Anglia in 1970, and several pictures of Lowestoft Corporation remind us of what was once there. Municipal pride was a fine thing, and as I took in the reassuring views of Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft buses, I felt an involuntary shudder as I thought of today's equivalent of solid looking Regents carrying healthy loads being Barbie-liveried Darts.

One of the most telling portents of things to come is a picture of a London Transport Atlantean bogged down in traffic in Rye Lane, Peckham. How much responsibility for decline was carried by Eastern Counties buses showing just 'Service' instead of a destination? There's still an attractive brightness in the BET liveries that appear, East Kent, Maidstone & District, Southdown and Aldershot & District.

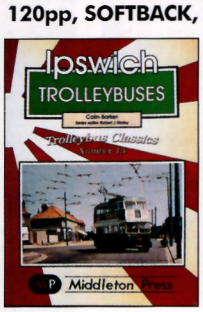
The pictures show buses as they were in 1970, though some were taken a year or two either side. So we see hints of NBC; an Aldershot & District Loline has grey wheels and NBC-style fleetnames while an M&D Leopard stands in leaf green livery alongside a shabby Atlantean still in old colours. It's a well-judged selection of pictures, with some record shots to please the purists and some that show more than just the bus. The text is peppered with useful facts and figures that put it all into context.

It's just a shame that the design of the book is so uninspired. Pictures are plonked down on the page with no attempt to capture the spirit of the age that the author has striven to present, its predictability emphasised by relentlessly alternating spreads of colour and black and white. For all that, it depicts the period well. If you're expecting a wallow in nostalgia, however, be prepared for the book's slightly disturbing edge. There's a chill wind in its homely comfort.

STEPHEN MORRIS

IPSWICH TROLLEYBUSES

COLIN BARKER, MIDDLETON PRESS, ISBN 1 904474 59 4, 230MM x 168MM 120pp, SOFTBACK, £14.95



Ipswich was the last municipal operator to introduce motorbuses. From 1923 until 1950, its only buses were electric trolleybuses, the last of which ran in 1963. In this 15th book in Middleton's Trolleybus Classics series, Colin Barker tells their story in words and some delightfully atmospheric pictures, which should appeal equally to local historians and a core audience of enthusiasts.

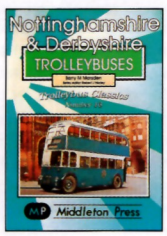
Ipswich's were by no means ordinary trolleybuses. Prewar, most were built locally by Ransomes or Garrett and these included five 1928 single-deckers with set-back front axles and — as operated originally — a halfcab arrangement with open verandah for one-man operation. The last Ransomes trolley to enter service in the UK — Massey-bodied double-decker 89 of 1940 — figures in several pictures taken around the system. Ransomes also periodically tested other operators' trolleybuses under Ipswich's wires and examples for St Helens and Derby are illustrated, as are two ex-Ipswich Sunbeams in later life at Walsall.

The pictures are a delight. Many capture street scenes rich in bygone fashions, traffic and buildings as well as the buses themselves and their overhead wiring. Without prejudice to many of the others, I must mention some splendid scenes from the mid-1920s and more recent ones by John Gillham in which he captured the trolleybuses blending into the townscape they served.

ALAN MILLAR

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE & DERBYSHIRE TROLLEYBUSES

BARRY M. MARSDEN, MIDDLETON PRESS, ISBN 1 904474 63 2, 230MM x 168MM, 120pp, SOFTBACK, £14.95



Notts & Derby was an exception to the order of Britain's vanished trolleybus systems — a company rather than corporation system. As Barry Marsden's introduction to this 16th Trolleybus Classics explains, this difference manifested itself in two distinct ways.

It was interurban rather than confined to a single town or city, so its trunk A1 route between Ripley and Nottingham was the longest through trolleybus route in Britain, taking 90min to negotiate the 230 stops along its 15-mile length. The other difference was that it closed overnight rather than enduring a protracted death by a thousand cuts and committee meetings.

The British Transport Commission, which owned it from 1948, wielded its axe in April 1953. In the biggest-ever sale of secondhand trolleybus equipment, all 52 of its surviving vehicles went to Bradford Corporation for £62,500 and the BTC offloaded the running wire for £23,438. In addition, various local councils paid £6 each to use 1,338 of its 1,679 traction poles as street lighting standards.

Twenty-five of N&D's original trolleybuses — new in 1932/33 — were halfcab AECs with dummy radiators and bonnets. A picture towards the end of the book reveals the electrical equipment concealed beneath the trappings of more common contemporary motorbuses.

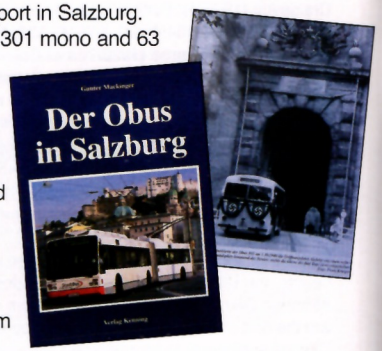
As with other books in this excellent series, most of the pictures — some in this case by the legendary Geoffrey Atkins — capture the routes served as well as the vehicles. They help us revisit a time when public transport was the travel mode for the majority and cars the exception, when hat wearing was the norm, coal was king and prefabs formed part of the urban landscape.

ALAN MILLAR

DER OBUS IN SALZBURG

GUNTER MACKINGER, VERLAG KENNING (www.verlag-kenning.de), ISBN 3 933613 74 4, 240MM x 190MM, 224pp, HARDBACK, euro38.90

This is a fascinating detailed German language history of the trolleybuses of Salzburg. The author has covered, in considerable detail, the construction and opening of the system — on 1 October 1940 during the World War 2 Austrian *Anschluß* — with quality period photographs. An overview of public transport in Austria sets the scene along with detail of other forms of transport in Salzburg.



Its excellent 301 mono and 63 colour photos cover the whole period of operation, and are complemented by 20 maps and line drawings showing the expansion from 1940 to the present day, as well as depot diagrams. One colour line drawing shows the overhead layout and power station feeder arrangements.

There are details of every vehicle operated from 1940 to 2005, commencement and withdrawal from service dates, and complete manufacturers' specifications. In 2005, with over 140km of overhead and 80 vehicles, this remained a large system.

This magnificent work is a must for the bookshelf of any trolleybus devotee. It is worth the money for the photographs alone, even if you do not understand German. If you are planning a trip to visit Salzburg, this is the Bible of information to make your stay even more enjoyable. It is printed to the highest standard.

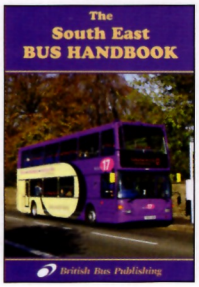
BILL TUCKWELL

SOUTH EAST BUS HANDBOOK

BRITISH BUS PUBLISHING, ISBN 1 904875 51 3, 210MM x 148MM 160pp, SOFTBACK, £16.25

This handbook is to the usual standard we expect of the publisher, with colour illustration throughout. As has been mentioned before, I think it's a shame that the regional handbooks don't include the big group fleets, which are in the main group handbooks, as they don't give a total representation of the fleets in the area.

In this case as well as Stagecoach South and the Arriva companies, it is missing Brighton & Hove, Metrobus and Oxford Bus Company as they're now in the separate Go-Ahead book. However, Southern Vectis and Solent Blue Line are included; Go-Ahead bought them after that group's handbook came out.



Impressively, it has a separate entry for Flight Hallmark after its split from Centra, and I can forgive the publisher for not rehashing the entire book at such a late stage, so Flight Hallmark comes straight after Centra rather than in alphabetical order.

It's amazing how many fascinating operators are in the south-east; several specialising in airport work are included, such as British Airways and less obvious ones like OFJ Connections of Staines whose surprisingly large fleet is a mystery to me living only five miles away.

STEPHEN MORRIS

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT

SCOTTISH TRAMWAY & TRANSPORT SOCIETY, ISSN 0048-9808, 144MM X 210MM, 56pp, SOFTBACK, £5.95

The STTS magazine goes from strength to strength with each issue, both in terms of content and quality. It is a pity that it only appears once a year, but it is a tribute to the small group of volunteers who produce it.

Scottish Transport
The Annual Magazine of The Scottish Tramway & Transport Society
The Westwell Years
The return of the Venturer
Major Subway Upgrade

The 2005 edition offers an excellent blend of articles covering different modes of transport — including the distinctive trams that served Portobello, an insight into the events of the years when Alan Westwell was in charge of Glasgow's buses, current developments on the Glasgow Subway, the repatriation of the Sydney Albion Venturer now being restored at the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, the 1924 rail collision at Haymarket station, and some 'what might have been' transport extensions into rural Renfrewshire.

Each article is well illustrated with a good selection of black and white or colour photographs — including a view of Clarkston tram terminus in 1951 that is remarkable for the absence of traffic, reminders of Central SMT's Redline livery, Dundee Corporation's drab two-tone green and Aberdeen Corporation's green and cream bus and tram colours. Bringing things up to date are two photographs of a First Glasgow Ailsa hiding its age well in its current 'Barbie' colours.

SANDY MACDONALD

1/76TH-SCALE MODELS
BRITBUS ALDERSHOT & DISTRICT DENNIS LOLINE III/ALEXANDER **Guide price £30**

This new casting — released initially as A&D 397 (397 COR)— has several innovative features and is much more accurate than some earlier Britbus models.

A detailed cab has a handbrake lever and red-painted switchbox and tiny tax discs adorn the driver's nearside window. Silvered rearview mirrors are in scale. Inside the saloons, stanchions are correctly sited, seats are grey, floor is brown and stairwell walls are cream (with a rail around the top). In the lower saloon, the stairwell is again superb, with luggage cubbyhole edged in silver, the conductor's cubbyhole and a bell push, as well as a waybill holder slot.

The front grille shape is good, although the grille itself is merely an undetailed matt black recess. Headlamps and foglamp are lenses, side flashers are printed on. Overall, the shape is good with deep sweeping dome curves. The windscreen is a little small, but has a nicely detailed wiper. Window pans are properly shaped, with well-fitting glazing that generally avoids the 'lensy' look of some. Window vents are printed neatly on to the glazing.

Unfortunately, as with earlier Britbus models, a bright orange exhaust pipe detracts from the realism of the offside. Finish quality is excellent, however, with neat lettering in correct font — apart from a slightly over-sized front registration plate/mark.

My thanks to the London Transport Museum Shop for lending a pre-production casting; production models may differ in detail.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE

BRITBUS WESTERN SMT GUY ARAB III/ PARK ROYAL **Guide price £30**

As with EFE's Bristol Lodekka FLF, Britbus's Western SMT Guy Arab III comes in two versions — one for the general market and a special edition for the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum's 10th anniversary at Lathalmond.

The general release depicts JY2296 (XS 6558), acquired with Paisley & District in 1951. This had Guy bodywork on Park Royal frames and is shown running to the uncommon destination of 'City Boundary' rather than a typical Paisley place name. However, the destination looks good behind its Perspex screen, above which the Western fleet name panel is almost realistically displayed — the framing should intrude slightly into the upper cream band. The special edition depicts JY2295 (XS 6557) running to Howe Street, another uncommon destination. This has a nearside advertisement for Western's Glasgow-London service, while the offside commemorates the SVBM.

While collectors may be prepared to pay a premium for limited range castings that might not otherwise be produced, the Park Royal Guy was operated widely in a range of liveries. I expected first rate accuracy, detail and quality, but the upper deck front window profile doesn't capture the curve of the body and, on my model, there's a poor fit between the nearside body panel and front nearside window frame, plus a decided lean to the driver's windscreen. I like the detail in the mirrors and windscreen wiper, a properly scaled horizontal safety pole fitted behind the upper-deck front window and a bonnet that opens to reveal reasonable engine detail.

The livery and most gold lettering (other than the overly plain main fleetname) are commendably accurate. But the effect is marred by unnecessarily large grab poles on the rear platform, and a wrongly positioned rear numberplate, which should be in the offside rear corner. There is a fixing peg in this area (in place of internal support poles), but I cannot see why the registration was not printed on to this.

GARRY WARD

TRUX MODELS SYDNEY AEC REGENT III

Guide Price £18 (available only on-line from www.topgear.com.au — follow the links to Trux, for buses)

Trux has increased the range of its Sydney double-deckers with a revised Regent III casting, this time with a proper AEC radiator rather than the earlier version with Albion Venturer unit with a silver bar painted on. Although the general shape of the model is excellent, the radiator still isn't right, looking like a standard Regent III trying to convert into an RT. But it's an improvement over the first attempt.

The casting is doubly of interest, as it's the first to be released in an independent afterlife livery. MO 4559 wears the red/cream/blue of Rover Motors and is adorned with liberal advertising. As with previous versions, it has an attractive mix of part-open and closed 'tropical' half-slider windows.

My model arrived within four days. If more than one model is delivered together, they are liable to VAT in the UK (payable to the Post Office), significantly increasing the cost. Best to order singly.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE

MIKE FENTON breaks his usual rules to tell the story of a rare coach that combined Swedish chassis components with a Swiss body

My interests in buses and coaches are, I suspect, different from many enthusiasts', as I have no favourite operator. It is the vehicles themselves that provide the fascination regardless of who operates them.

I also rarely photograph vehicles with foreign bodywork on foreign chassis so, if current trends continue, there may come a time when there is not much I want to shoot, assuming that I am still around and capable of taking photographs by then. That said, I will now demonstrate that I don't always obey my own rules by featuring one of Volvo's rare C10M models — the one bodied expensively in stainless steel in Switzerland by Ramseier & Jenzer.

Volvo launched the underfloor-engined C10M in 1984 and, of the 79 built, only 10 were sold in Britain to four different operators. Appropriately, the first of these was registered 25 CTM. It was new to Seamarks of Luton in early 1985 and I chanced upon it in April 1990 when it had brought visitors to *Last of the Summer Wine* Country in Holmfirth, West Yorkshire. Clearly visible in the illustration is this 12m model's exceptionally long 7m wheelbase.

The Seamarks business and the C10M passed subsequently to Dunn-Line of Nottingham in 2000 and I last saw it a couple of years later in withdrawn condition at the firm's Basford garage, a sad end for such a refined coach.

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KEIGHLEY IS HOME TO SAMMY'S FIRST ROUTEMASTER

The latest additions to the Keighley Bus Museum's collection include an ex-London Routemaster painted in the blue and grey livery of Samuel Ledgard, the Armley, West Yorkshire independent with almost as enduring a fan following as the Routemaster itself.

RM541 was new in 1960, seven years before West Yorkshire Road Car took over Ledgard's services. It ended up in the London Central fleet and is now owned by Bradford preservationist Peter Heaps, who has painted it in a livery it might have worn had Ledgard survived another 20 years.

'The Ledgard company was renowned for buying secondhand London buses and running them in Leeds, Bradford, Otley and Rawdon,' he says. 'Although Ledgard never owned a Routemaster, the current livery of RM541 is a tribute to that long gone but still much remembered eccentric Yorkshire bus company.'

It is one of two vehicles that he has added to the collection at the museum's Riverside Depot; the other is Burnley, Colne & Nelson 73, a 1967 East Lancs-bodied Leyland Tiger Cub — the last of 30 built for the undertaking that became Burnley & Pendle in 1974.

Purists who are worried about the Ledgard Routemaster should be reassured that the Keighley museum also has ex-Arriva London South RM736, which it is restoring to the condition in which it was new to London Transport in 1961. It hopes to have it ready in time for its St George's Day Market in April.

■ The Keighley Bus Museum will again run free bus services to the public on **Christmas Day**. Two of its buses will provide hourly services on four routes from Keighley town centre between 10.30 and 16.00, catering primarily for the general public. Despite bitterly cold weather, the similar 2004 service carried 332 passengers. *Picture by CHRIS WHITEOAK*

RALLY CALENDAR UPDATE

DECEMBER

27 **Llandudno** Toy & Train Fair, North Wales Conference Centre. Proceeds to Llandudno Transport Festival.

JANUARY

1 **Winchester.** Friends of King Alfred Buses Running Day and transport enthusiasts' bazaar, 08.50 to 17.30. Over 30 heritage buses and coaches — notably of King Alfred, Aldershot & District, Hants & Dorset, Wilts & Dorset, Royal Blue and Associated Motorways — are expected to provide free services in and around Winchester and central Hampshire. Website: www.fokab.org.uk

If you are planning events in 2006, you won't want to miss out on the Rally Calendar & Museum Guide supplements in March and April *Buses*. For a free listing, please send details to the editor at the **NEW Leven** address published on p2 or by e-mail to buseseditor@btconnect.com to arrive no later than **Friday 13 January**.

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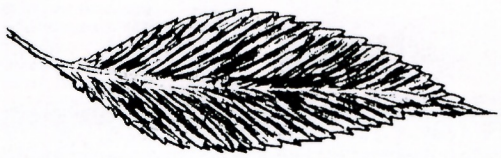

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PMP Transport Films

'A very happy New Year to our friends in the UK and overseas, yet really great new releases this month and still on DVD and video formats.'

1311. Bus Spot Gosport & Fareham. The usual format starts in the 1970s NBC era then a depot visit in 1990 plus action scenes through 90s into 21st century.

1312. Fife & Lathalmond. UK. Buses. Scotland. August 2005. Visits to Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline and the open weekend at Lathalmond museum.

1313. East Kent. UK Buses. August 2005. We start at Canterbury with plenty of activity incl commemorative liveries, then on to Dover ends at Folkestone.

1321. Showbus. UK. Buses. September 2005. Cambridgeshire. The annual celebration of buses with nearly 500 entrants, all from a new vantage point.

1322. Showbus. UK. Buses. September 2005. Cambridgeshire. We continue coverage of the busiest entry period leaving off just before final stragglers.

1323. Greater Manchester. UK. Buses. August / September 2005. Visits to Bolton (Arriva first weekday of Blue Bus), Manchester and Bury for Scania Artics.

1324. London.UK.Buses.September 2005. Trafalgar Square and Victoria , sunny weather, lots of Routemasters on all of the last three normal service routes.

1325. London. UK. Buses. September 2005. Haymarket, Marble Arch, Elephant & Castle, Oxford St, continues on from previous volume, more RMs in service.

1326. Cambridge. UK. Buses. September 2005. The annual bash at Cambridge prior to Showbus, Cavalier, Burtons, Whippets plus of course Stagecoach.

1327. Leicester. UK. Buses. October 2005. Much requested update on the bus scene, which has seen considerable modernisation, quite a bright autumn day.

1328. Roll on Switzerland. Trolleybuses / Trams / Light Rail. 1960s-80s. A whole range of operators drawn from throughout the PMP archive with sound added.

1329. Deregulation around London. UK. Buses. By Tim Bubb, early video coverage including Stevenage, Thurrock, Bexleyheath, Romford, Slough and London.

1330. Hertfordshire. UK. Buses. 2005. Summer scenes at Hemel Hempstead and then a sunny autumn day in Stevenage , wow what a mixture of liveries there.

1331. Bedfordshire. UK. Buses. First a look back at Bedford in the RM era at Deregulation then forward to Oct 2005 plus Luton also in October 2005.

1332. Colchester. Bus Spot. UK. Buses. Cine era includes municipal , great scenes courtesy Tim Bubb around deregulation, many indpts through to Burtons.

1333. Deregulation in South Wales. UK. Buses. Early video in an all new compilation to celebrate 20 years since deregulation, obvious locations plus some new.

1334. Greater Manchester. 2005. UK. Buses. Another slice of weekday bus life, visiting sunny Rochdale, more sunshine in Wigan and hectic scenes at Stockport.

1335. Blackpool. UK. Trams. The Tram Collection 1989-1992. All your favourite scenes transferred via digital film to enjoy with all the quality of the original.

1336. Blackpool. UK. Trams. The Tram Collection 1993-1996. All your favourite scenes transferred via digital film to enjoy with all the quality of the original.

1337. Blackpool. UK. Trams. The Tram Collection 1997-1998. All your favourite scenes transferred via digital film to enjoy with all the quality of the original **1338. Blackpool. UK. Trams. The Tram Collection 1998-2002.** All your favourite scenes right up until we started producing them from new in DVD format.

1339. World of Double Deckers. Buses. Archive footage from around the world with several rarities, includes Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, Middle East.

1340. Crich. National Tramway Museum. Derbyshire. UK. A retro compendium with three visits to the Tramathon days in 1991, 1992 and 2002 now on DVD.

1341. Malta. Buses. 1998. A Retro Compendium with all the highlights of our trip with as many buses crammed in as we could, our first visit in post bus livery era.

PMP, 17 BIRCHWOOD DRIVE, LOWER PEOVER, CHESHIRE WA16 9QJ

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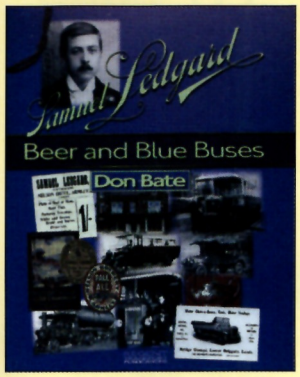
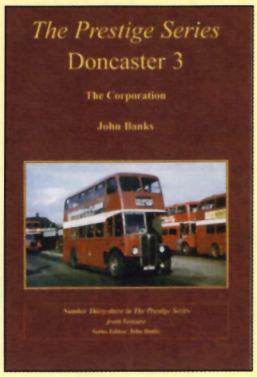
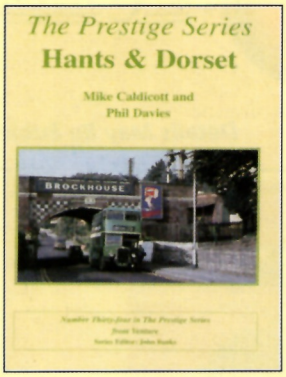
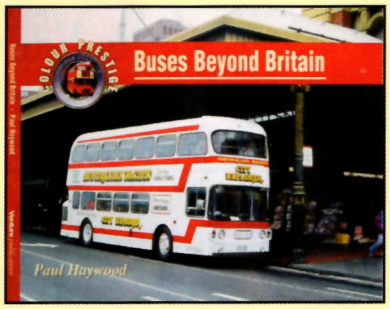
MDS BOOK SALES NEW FOR CHRISTMAS









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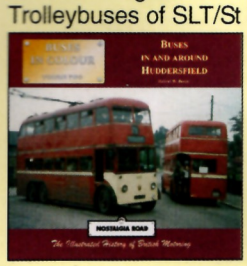

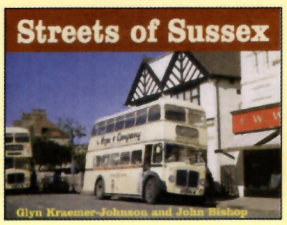

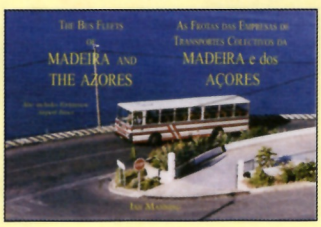

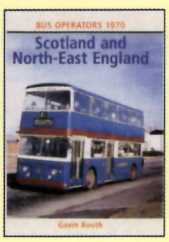

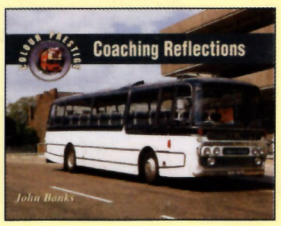

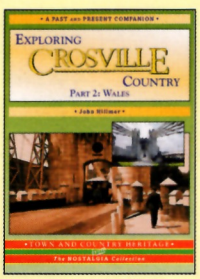

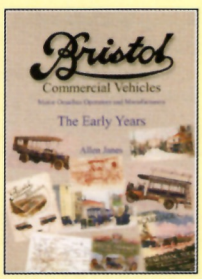

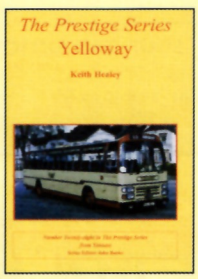

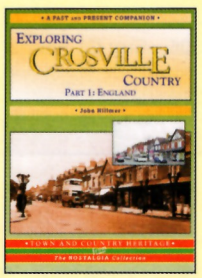

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NEW Exclusive First Editions RELEASES ISSUE 10 2005

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Details May Be Subject to Change

30004 AEC Regal 10T10 LONDON TRANSPORT

T504 has been the subject of our attention before in its original Greenline livery. ELP 228 is seen this time in red central London livery operating route 213 to Sutton.

NOVEMBER RELEASE ☐

29405 Bristol RELH D/P Coach EASTERN COUNTIES NBC

It has been a long time since NBC liveries were featured on our models so this will please NBC enthusiasts. Registered GCL 344N, fleet number RLE 742 is working route 851 to Ipswich.

NOVEMBER RELEASE ☐

30506 Guy GS Special SOUTHERN MOTORWAYS

The greatest number of ex - London Guy GS buses to work together in one fleet were operated by Southern Motorways. Registered MXX 343, fleet number GS 43 is working route 3 to Midhurst.

NOVEMBER RELEASE. ☐

31301 B20 DM Fleetline SHILLIBEER OMNIBUS

After many requests we have added the DMS chimneys to produce the B20 Fleetline version of the DMS. In Shillibeer livery DM2646, registered THX 646S works route 134 to Tottenham Court Road Station.

DECEMBER RELEASE. ☐

25106 Bristol RELL WEST YORKSHIRE

In standard Tilling livery, West Yorkshires RELL looks splendid. Fleet number 1403 registered OWT 776M operates route 75B to Newall.

NOVEMBER RELEASE ☐

17304 Leyland National Mk I Long GREENLINE NBC

As the old saying goes wait forever then two come along together, here we have one of the small number of long Nationals from the London fleet. Fleet number LNC 26 registered NPD 126L is operating route 721 to London Aldgate.

DECEMBER RELEASE. ☐

27616 Wright Volvo Renown STRATHTAY

This very colourful livery looks excellent adorning the modern lines of our Volvo Renown. Registered R526 TWR, fleet number 616 works route 73 to Dundee City Centre via Broughty Ferry.

NOVEMBER RELEASE. ☐

30102 AEC 8W Oval Tanker REGENT PETROL

The first general release of our AEC Tanker fitted with the modified cab style, features Regent Tanker fleet number 790 registered KYF 16. This attractive livery displays the Havoline Oil branding on the rear.

OCTOBER RELEASE. ☐

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